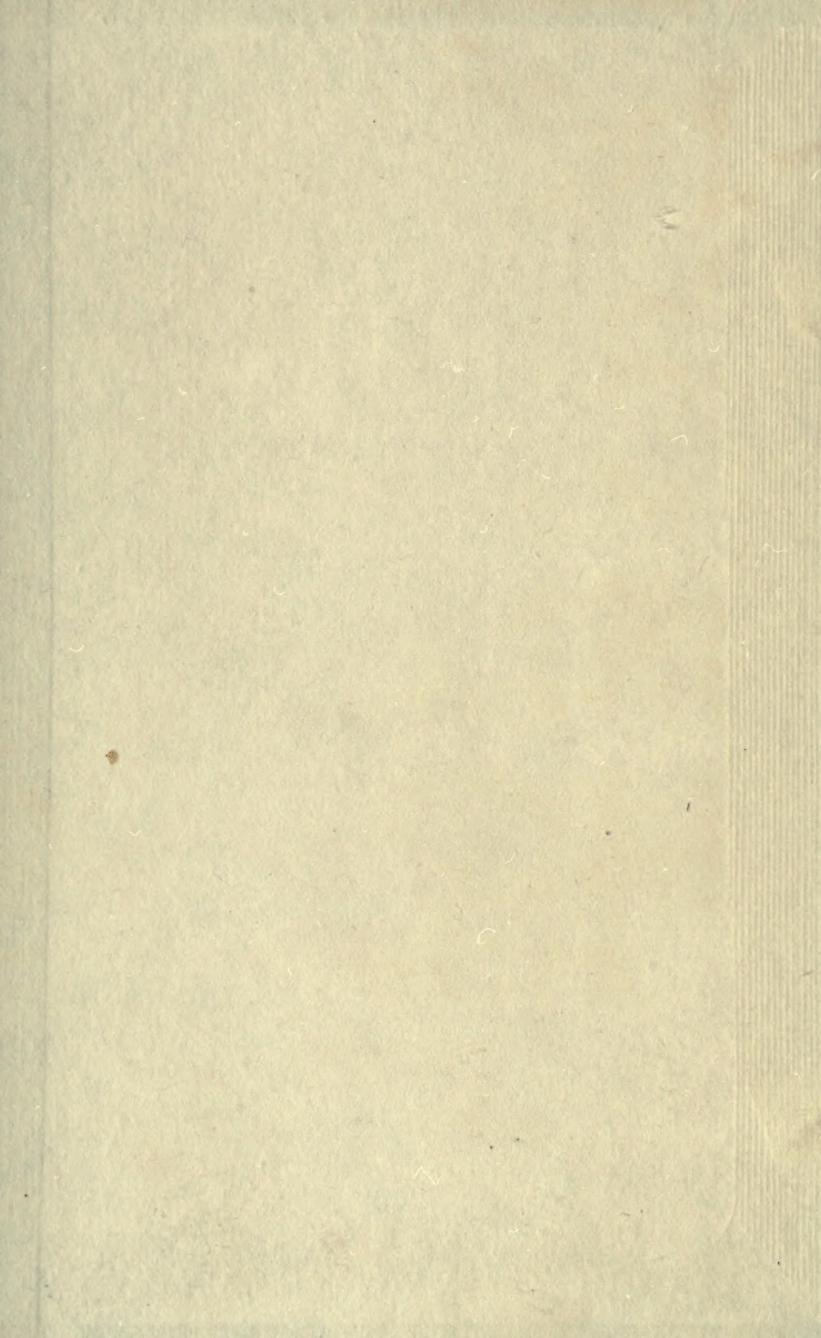


DAYS
OF HISTORY

C.V. CALVERT
AND
B.L.K. HENDERSON



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THE FLINT KNAPPER

DAYS OF HISTORY

BY

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PREFACE

THESE glimpses into History are, so far as we know, a novel attempt to offer a fairly continuous view of our national life by means of scenes, which, based upon historical fact, are to a certain extent dramatic and representative of the feelings of the characters round which they are centred. No attempt has been made to copy slavishly the language of any period or to produce Wardour Street English. At the same time we have somewhat modified modern speech in order to impart an old-world flavour to scenes of long ago. It is quite possible that slight historical inaccuracies have crept in here and there; but we believe these are inevitable in dealing imaginatively with details of which little is known. We should be obliged, however, if anyone who notices any such inaccuracy would be good enough to point it out to us.

C. V. C.

B. L. K. H.

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DAYS OF HISTORY

I

THE FLINT KNAPPER

I WAS walking one bright summer's day along the Chiltern Hills a few miles from Dunstable. My companion was a farmer of the district, and he was taking me to see a hill which had interested him from his youth, for he said that he felt sure there had been many strange things done in that place, so much so that he wandered here constantly, trying to picture the past and make up his mind how the hill was used as an observation post in the olden times. We wandered across the fields, climbing higher and higher, now wending our way through a beech grove, now following a winding path (a very old path), now clambering through a hedge. My companion showed me a chalky bank and pointed out the place where he had found human bones. At last he sat down on a mound, saying, as he used his stick as an indicator, "That's the spot that interests me especially, because that's where he used to sit, or, anyway, he sat near there, and I've often ploughed up bits of his handiwork. I wonder who he was and how long ago he lived!"

I looked around me. We were on the crest of a hill which commanded a wide view over the southern part of Bedfordshire. For miles and miles north, east, and west, I could see the open county. Behind me to the south the hills rose higher, and close by was that old, old path, at this part deep down between bushy banks—strange banks with curious hollows here and there, where

a man could sit and see people coming and going, yet never be seen himself. Truly it was a wonderful spot for a vantage-ground. The view was splendid, but I was not thinking about that just then. I turned to my friend and said, "What kind of bits of work do you pick up?" "Shaped pieces of flint," he said. "I've handled many such pieces, and given many away to people who have asked for them." "Celts?" I asked. He nodded his head by way of answer.

Perhaps the walk had tired me, or perhaps the air upon the hills was very strong, but, for some reason or the other, I began to dream, and this is what I dreamed that day upon the Chiltern Hills.

I was sitting in that very same spot thousands of years ago. There was the sun shining brightly; there was the view at my feet, only, instead of open fields, there were thick forests on the plain, and the hills behind me were covered with dense vegetation. Here and there were open sheets of water, and the sun glinted upon them till they flashed again. By my side was a man, and, as I looked at him, I started, for my old friend had certainly undergone a wonderful change. This was a younger man, his arms and legs bare, and his body clad in a rough skin garment, clumsily fastened round his waist by a thong. His hair was dark, unkempt, and long, and his skin was almost black with exposure to sun and air. He glanced at me with dark, flashing eyes, and then went on with his work. In his right hand he held a rough, hard-looking stone; in his left he gripped another about six inches long, flat and unshaped at one end, but the other was partly curved and growing to an edge. He kept on chip, chip, chipping, knocking the rough stone against the other, and every time he struck a little piece of flint flew off. Now and again, without stopping his work, he glanced down the hill-side or turned his head and looked swiftly behind him. Almost as I watched, the stone in his hand became more and more shapely, till at last I saw he had made it beautifully curved and sharp. It was a celt, a fine, new celt, like those I had at home; only they were old and discoloured, while this sparkled in the sun.

"It looks easy enough," I thought. So I picked up two stones that looked suitable, and began knocking them together. After two or three knocks, which certainly did not damage the stone, I gave a cry of pain, and saw a trickle of blood running down my hand. The man smiled, picked up the stones I had dropped, began chip, chip, chipping, and, as if by a miracle, pieces flew here and there, and one stone took on a rough shape. Still the man glanced here and there, up the hill and down the hill, then chipped again vigorously. "Why do you look about you so?" I asked. But he just shook his head, smiled, and went on knocking. He could not understand a word I said.

I rose, and walked a little way off in one of the directions my craftsman had looked, and, as I did so, I caught sight of a head. Sure enough, in one of the very hollows on the bank by the old, old path, there was another man chip, chip, chipping, and he, too, kept glancing about him. "Another of them!" I thought. "How many more are there?" So I walked about, up and down, and then I found out that in wonderfully hidden places up the hill and down the hill there were men hard at work and all keeping a sharp look out, looking at their nearest companions to see if any alarm was being given. In one hollow I found quite a number of men. Some were making axe-heads, some spear-heads; others were making hammers of stone; others again were binding the fashioned stones to poles, or tough ash sticks, by means of leathern thongs. Every now and again I heard a sort of low chant, as well as the sharp chipping noise, and I knew the workmen were singing at their toil. "A colony of flint knappers!" My old friend was right, then. How lucky I was to see this sight, and how pleased he would be when I could tell him all about it.

Just then my first acquaintance came strolling along, bare-foot and walking with a sort of stealthy movement over the rough stony ground. He touched my arm and beckoned me to follow him. He led me to a pit on the hill-side (unless I am very much mistaken, I had passed it on my way up that afternoon), and, standing by the

side, he pointed with his great gnarled paw. Looking in, I saw what he wished me to see. In the hollow lay numerous stones of just about the right size and shape for their implements. Here, then, was their supply. The weather had removed the sandy subsoil and washed the chalk away, and there was a plentiful store of material. Then my friend, the flint knapper, touched me again and led the way for me to follow. He came and stood by the bank well sheltered by trees and shrubs. He touched his lips, and then put his hand to his ear, listening and looking keenly at a comrade sitting in a hollow some way off. I could hear nothing but the wind rustling the trees, but the other man was evidently on the look out also, and, sure enough, after some time I saw a little group of men coming slowly along the road. They had bundles on their backs, and looked anxiously about them. Suddenly up darted a form from the opposite bank and stood with bent bow and arrow, pointing. Another and another, almost to a moment, appeared, till dozens of bows and arrows marked the new-comers. They cried out something. What would I not have given to know their language! Then they laid down their bundles, and knelt upon the track. Two or three of the stone-workers leapt down, examined them closely to see they had no hidden weapons, and then they all advanced together. We fell in behind, and, following them, came to a sort of crude village, composed of rough huts made of branches dabbled over with clay. Here were assembled old men, women, and children, some occupied in roasting meat, others lying prone on the sun-baked earth, others asleep. When we came in sight they all fell to talking. Food was put before the strangers, and after a meal and much chattering, they began to bargain. Out of the bundles came shells, fruits, skins, and coloured stones, and I discovered these were the money of those days. For a man would make a little pile of things, say some words, and after shakings of the head and refusals, for his pile he would get a shaped spear-head or axe-head.

I was getting wonderfully interested and just on the point of doing a bit of bargaining on my own account,

when all at once I heard a terrific crash in the forest; great branches were forced aside like twigs, and screams arose from the people, and a great mammoth, with huge curved tusks and a shaggy coat of woolly hair, came thundering towards us, his eyes glaring like fires. I turned and fled, caught my foot against a piece of brushwood, and, just as the mammoth came like a monster on the top of me . . .

I heard a voice saying, "It is quite time we turned back home for tea. You've been asleep for more than an hour." And there was my good, patient old friend standing smiling by my side, with his watch in his hand. I felt I had been very impolite, but after all I was glad to escape from that terrible mammoth.

II

WAYLAND SMITH

SOME folk say that he can best be seen on dark, windy nights, when all the hills are full of noise and the branches of the beech-trees toss and heave as the dead leaves go rushing along the chalky ground. Others say, "No! The best time to see him is on some warm day in summer, when all nature seems to lie asleep. If you go quietly up the hill-side in the morning, and lie among the trees near the cave, and if you can keep awake, it is quite possible to see him; for it is just at such a time that he puts his head round the corner to find out if anyone is near at hand. Then, provided he does not catch sight of you, he comes out, stretching himself as though he had been stooping over his work, looking up to the great blue sky as if in delight, and breathing the sweet breeze that comes gently over the grass of the hill." There are some very matter-of-fact people who say that he cannot be seen at all. Perhaps they are right. Still, such people are generally rather dull folk—they are not the kind who can play games, or turn a handkerchief into a white rabbit, or laugh easily. Their laugh seems rusty somehow, and wants oiling. People of that sort study big books without pictures in them, or write a great deal, or read papers before meetings. Some of them are called historians.

At any rate, Dick said he saw Wayland Smith, and nothing that any dry-as-dust person could say or write would ever make Dick believe that he had not seen the ancient blacksmith. He lived with his parents at Wantage; he had read stories; he had heard lessons at school. Wayland Smith's name always seemed to crop

up somehow when Dick was about. He heard people say what was the best time to see the smith. He heard people discuss where Wayland used to live. Some said it was down in Sussex; some said it was in other places; and so it went on till Dick was about twelve years old and possessed a bicycle, a sixpence with a hole in it, and a knife with two blades (rather blunt) and a corkscrew. By this time Dick was the sort of boy who will find things out. You know the sort. He goes here, there, and everywhere, till grown-up people say, "The child is ubiquitous!"

Now Dick, after weighing all the evidence with regard to Wayland the Smith, had come to the firm conclusion that, if he existed at all, it must be among the Berkshire hills. He admitted that Wayland might have dwelt elsewhere at different times; but, taking one consideration with another, Dick was positive that at some time or other, possibly when the great white horse was carved out on the hill-side, Wayland had come to live definitely on the hill-top, and since then he had not changed his residence. Of course, Dick knew that Wayland was much older than the people of the district seemed to imagine. An old clergyman had told him one day, when he was rambling about trying to find out something about Wayland, that in truth Wayland was a heathen, and that, long before Christianity was brought to these islands, the smith had lived here and had done all sorts of work for the gods of an older worship. But, whether it had been for Odin and 'Thor, or for gods who were worshipped here before their day, the clergyman could not say. He was an honest man, and he remarked, "I really do not know. All I can say is, read a book called *Puck of Pook's Hill*, and in that you will find a story about Wayland Smith, where you will discover how the old smith was released from bondage by a gentleman's simple 'Thank you,' and to show his joy fashioned a wonderful sword with runes of prophecy all over the blade—a sword that could sing. Then after that no one knows what happened to Wayland."

"Ah," said Dick, drawing a deep breath and looking hard at the clergyman, "thank you!"

Now, perhaps it was because Dick said "Thank you!" that very soon after that day he saw Wayland Smith. He cycled out from Wantage one half-holiday, had a lovely ride to the hills, and watched the sun and shadow playing hide-and-seek in and out of the hollows; visited the Blowing Stone, left his bicycle at a cottage, and, taking his tea with him, went up the hill to the old white horse. He made straight for the horse's eye, and sat down to eat and think. After he had finished his meal (it didn't take very long) he moved on to the cromlech, which people call Wayland Smith's Cave. He did not go in, but sat down some little distance off and thought hard. He thought about the men who lived in caves and pits and used chipped flint weapons; he tried to picture the River-Drift Men and the Lake Dwellers; he blundered along through the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. There came to his mind scenes of men building earthworks, barrows, long, and round, and twin; and at last he was busily engaged in placing the stones in circles at Stonehenge—at least he was directing thousands of men who were working under him. Just as he was getting rather vexed with two or three fellows who were inclined to be lazy, somebody behind him said, "You asked for me, I think?" Dick turned round, and, sure enough, there was Wayland Smith. He did not need to be introduced; the smith was so clearly a smith, and still more clearly Wayland Smith. His long white beard and rough hair, his brawny arms and strong hands knobbed and massive with muscle told the fact plainly. But what was better evidence was the apron he wore round his waist and the mighty hammer he grasped in his right hand. "Ye—es," said Dick. He had to say something, but, to tell the truth, he was so taken aback that he was quite at a loss for words. Then he added, "Thank you, Wayland Smith!"

The old man smiled; the evening breeze lifted his beard and waved his snow-white hair. Putting down his hammer, he laid his hand gently on Dick's shoulder. "That's right, Dick; always be polite. Now, you have been seeking me for a long time, and I happen to have a

few minutes to spare, so we can talk as much as ever you wish. Do you want to ask me any questions?"

"I do," answered the boy—"lots and lots of questions."

"Go on, then," said the old man.

"Well," remarked Dick, "are you really Wayland Smith?"

"It seems as though I was, doesn't it?"

"When did you live?" was Dick's next question.

"Am I talking to you, now?" Wayland replied.

"Yes, but . . . oh, I cannot think what I want to say!" said poor Dick.

"Then I will talk to you," remarked his comrade; "and all you've to do is to listen. I do not know exactly when I lived, or where I lived, for in those bygone days people did not keep a close record of time and place. All I know is that it was long, long ago, away back in the days when men were turning from old customs and striving to find out new ways of doing things. I had met people who had come to this land from other lands and knew things we did not know. Two of them lived with me for a time. They showed me how to take what you call metals and soften them with fire. Especially did they show me how to deal with the hardest of all metals—iron. We made fires, shaped things like this" (and he held up his great hammer); "we beat, and bent, and tamed what before had been stronger than man. Because I was hospitable to these strangers, they taught me their secrets before they went away, and left me the wisest man in the land. So it came to pass that I, Wayland, made things of iron, and men called me the Smiter, because I clanged my hammer on the glowing metal till the sparks flew out in showers. Ah yes! and they went further than that. Because I knew what others did not know, because I could make the dull hard iron glow like the eyes of an angry god, and because I could turn and twist this glowing, fiery thing, men even began to regard me as a god—even me, a mortal like themselves. I seemed to be a being apart from them; not that I wanted to keep my secrets to myself. Often did I offer to teach

them, but they, simple folks, seemed afraid of my powers, and brought me offerings of meat and corn.

"Then came the war. A neighbouring people wished to take our lands and moved in swarms towards us. As though a voice thundered in my brain, the words came to me, 'Make sharp things; place better, truer weapons in your brothers' hands!' And so I did. Day and night I toiled. Yea, and, even though they were unwilling, I made others toil with me and learn the secrets of my craft. Soon, very soon, I had put into the hands of my brethren what you now call swords and spears, axe-heads and bolts, and with these they easily beat the foe back and saved their lands from shame. Yet, although now many men knew my craft, my fellows even more regarded me as above other men. They called me their Deliverer, their Hope, and their Confidence. They offered me what I would, and as time passed by I became the very centre of their life. They brought me their difficulties, they asked for my advice, and I taught them many things. Still, I was only a being like themselves, just a man who had learned things from other men. So I grew old in their midst; the years flew by; summers waxed and waned; and at last, at last..." The old man paused and wiped a tear from his eyes.

Dick waited; at length he said timidly, for he, too, felt moved, "At last?"

"Ah!" said Wayland. "At last I left my friends and journeyed upon a far journey. I know they mourned for me, and missed me sorely; yet I could rejoice, for I had been able to teach them so much, to help them abundantly, and, though I had gone away from them, yet I could see them often and know their thoughts."

"How could you do that?" asked Dick.

"Nay, my son," quoth Wayland, "some things I may not tell you. But I could indeed see them, although they could not see me; and I know that they raised these stones in my memory, and that they passed away, leaving my name as a holy thing to be spoken almost in a whisper. Then came other races, and they too caught the frailest, yet the strongest, thing in the world—a spoken word—and

passed it on, and others for centuries spoke of 'Wayland Smith,' until you in these later and more wonderful days know about Wayland the Smith—the man who wrought the metals and taught his fellows to do the same, just one of the many men who have learned to 'do' things rather than say things, one of the inventors of the world, who, instead of living selfishly for themselves, have given freely of their gifts to their race. Many, nay, most have died in poverty and are forgotten, yet my name has endured."

A gentle touch upon Dick's shoulder startled him, and, glancing up, he saw the clergyman with the long white beard bending over him.

"Are you in a brown study about Wayland Smith, my boy?" asked he.

"Yes," said Dick; "I was."

"And do you know more about him now?" said the clergyman.

"I know everything about him," was Dick's reply.

"Thank you, sir."

III

THE ROMAN COLONY AT BATH (AQUÆ SOLIS)—FOURTH CENTURY

UNDER the bright sunshine of a summer's afternoon, Paulinus was seated in the atrium, or court, of his father's villa, which stood upon a hill just outside the beautiful town of Aquæ Solis.

Although, at first sight, his toga, close-cut hair, and shaven face gave him a Roman appearance, his tall, angular figure and long, lean face were those of a Celt.

His father had given him a liberal Roman education at the famous school of Verulamium, rightly judging that it was the duty of every Briton to acquire a good knowledge of the arts and sciences of the Latins, so that, by gaining the respect of their conquerors, the natives should gain a position more akin to that of an ally than of a slave.

The villa was built of stone and brick, faced with marble from Dorset, and with hard plaster, brightly coloured. The atrium, paved with tasteful mosaic, was surrounded by a portico. The centre was occupied by a tank, into which water flowed from the jaws of a bronze dolphin. At the farther end, between the pillars of the portico, an alabaster statue of Mithras stood on a little marble pedestal. Doors, wide open to admit the warm, sweet air, led to the rooms that surrounded the atrium. Through the open portal of the entrance-hall gleamed a sunny view of the outer garden and of the wooded downs which rose beyond the films of wood-smoke, hovering above the town in the valley.

Paulinus heard a light rustling of robes, and his sister, Lucilla, came out of the portico into the sunshine. She



THE MARKET-PLACE AT AQUÆ SOLIS

wore flowing garments of pale green, over which fell a short cloak of the same colour, but darker and hemmed with silver. Her shoulders and arms were bare; on the left upper arm flashed a gold bracelet fashioned like a snake, and her brown hair, crimped and coiled high above her head, was looped with a string of grey British pearls.

Followed by a negro slave, the brother and sister crossed the sunny garden and struck into a steep, cobbled lane leading to the city, which drowsed below in its girdle of brown walls and towers. Above these, here and there, projected the beams of the catapults, massive frames of wood, well oiled to preserve them from the weather.

They passed through the wide town gate, which was guarded by a Roman sentry, rigid in bronze armour, and holding a short spear in his right hand. The streets, paved with irregular slabs of ashlar, lay before them, cool in the shadow of stately buildings of marble, stone, or brick, faced with coloured stucco.

A motley crowd followed them—town people and country folk, soldiers, merchants, slaves of every nation, red-haired barbarians, quick-eyed Jews, supple Orientals, black Africans with woolly hair, broad noses, and thick purple lips. Mules and asses laden with merchandise jostled through the crowd; a magistrate in sumptuous robes of office, borne by perspiring slaves high above the foot-passengers, went by haughtily, attended by his guards. Carts jolted past, their iron tires rattling on the hard pavements. Three shaggy hunters led a couple of chained and muzzled bears, which glared viciously out of their red eyes at the spectators.

On the marble and stone counters of the shops, open to the street, were all manner of wares—food, oil, fruit, feathers, stuffs, copper and glass pots, bowls, and lamps, offered for sale by noisy slaves; street-sellers pushed their goods with hoarse cries. At a street corner, outside one of the stations of the vigiles, or firemen, scrawled in gaudy, tinted chalks, flamed a notice of two famous swordsmen, who, on the morrow, were to exhibit their skill. By one of the many fountains, round which water-carriers crowded, were flower-girls with baskets of fresh flowers.

A noisy procession of white-clothed people, crowned and garlanded with blossom, swept by. In their midst two stalwart youths led a bullock, with gilded horns and hoofs and smothered in wreaths of flowers. Immediately behind it strode gorgeous priests and a sacrificer, bearing a broad knife.

The brother and sister watched the procession vanish under the portico of a stately temple, on the steps of which they were joined by a Roman lady heavily jewelled and wearing rich robes. She persuaded Lucilla to go with her to the goldsmiths' shops in the market-place, where she would advise her on the choice of a head ornament. The black slave was bidden to accompany his young mistress.

Left to himself, Paulinus strolled across the crowded market-place, through which a body of Roman troops was passing. First came the auxiliaries, archers and slingers; next marched four trumpeters playing on curved instruments that encircled their bodies; these were followed by Roman soldiers, brown men of middle size, but muscular, with handsome, clear-cut features. They wore helmets and breastplates of bronze, above a heavy kilt formed of strips of leather, strengthened by metal plates. They were armed with two short, heavy swords, one on each side. With their shields slung on their backs and with shouldered spears, they marched by in perfect step, their iron-shod sandals ringing in time on the stone pavement.

When these had passed, Paulinus turned into the baths, a vast and splendid building, at the door of which he met an old schoolfellow, Aulus Cæpio, a Roman centurion. Together they entered the baths and proceeded to the Calidarium, or hot-water bath. This was a large hall, containing a tank of steaming water, filled by the famous, natural hot-springs of *Aquæ Solis*. They bathed at their leisure, and were rubbed down by two gigantic negroes.

From this place they adjourned to the Tepidarium, or cool bath, and plunged into a tank of lukewarm water; thence they proceeded to the Frigidarium, or cold bath.

It was a large sunny tank, open to the sky and surrounded by a portico of two stories, adorned with many statues. The place was crowded with bathers, many of them stout, elderly men, others invalids who had come here for treatment. Some of the younger, or more active, men were diving and swimming, in both of which exercises Paulinus and his friend excelled.

After a while they left the water, dressed themselves, and passed into a large, handsome court encircled by porticoes. Here they called for cakes and bowls of wine flavoured with blue borage. For a time they basked in the warm sunset glow, listening to a debate between two Greek philosophers, one of whom was endeavouring very plausibly to prove that the world does not exist and that all life is but a dream of the imagination. In another corner, an Egyptian in outlandish dress claimed for a small sum of money to foretell every man's fate.

When they had grown tired of this amusement, Paulinus and his friend entered a library, and examined some choice scrolls, containing the newest tales and poems in vogue at Rome. Paulinus purchased the works of the poet Ausonius, which were beautifully written on fine vellum.

Shouts of applause drew them to the *palæstra*, or wrestling school, near by, where two powerful men, naked save for a loin-cloth, were trying for a fall. One was a huge, sullen fellow, a Pict from the north beyond the Wall, immensely powerful, though clumsy. His opponent, shorter by a head, but very brawny, was a Roman, who presently threw the Pict thrice running, to the bewilderment of the lumbering giant.

In a corner sat two burly men, with brutal, battered faces—one a Thracian, the other a Calabrian. Their forearms and hands were armed with the terrible cestus, a kind of boxing-glove, formed of leather straps studded with knobs of lead. The burlier of the two, so Aulus assured Paulinus, could fell a bullock with a single blow of the heavy glove; but the other was so nimble that it was doubtful which of the two was the better man.

Paulinus now took leave of the Roman, and, quitting the baths, walked across the bridge that spanned the

beautiful river, and went up the hill on the other side to the villa of a friend. Here he was pressed to dine and spend the evening. His friend and he ate their meal, reclining on couches set about the table, after an ancient fashion that was then falling into disuse.

While they feasted, a Syrian rope-walker performed on a cord above their heads, after which an acrobat tumbled and danced upon her hands among sharp knives, balanced point upwards on the floor upon weighted handles.

It was late before Paulinus returned home in the moonlight. He made his way down steep country lanes to the ferry above the city, and was rowed across the glittering, moonlit stream. Landing, he slowly ascended a path that led up to his father's villa. After a while he halted, and stood looking down upon the city that lay blue and black under the moonlight in the hollow of the hills. Sounds of revelry and the challenge of the sentries rose faintly to him across the warm air of the night.

Suddenly a screech owl jarred out of some trees near by. At the sound, a wild figure sprang from the shadow of a wall into the whiteness of the path. It was a ragged barbarian, a runaway slave and a dangerous man, judging from the iron rings and broken shackles at his wrists. He barred the way, crying to Paulinus:

"Hail, master! An omen! An omen! Ay, look your fill, while you may, at yonder city, for already we men of the north are assembling, and such a storm is preparing that it will break the wings of the Roman eagles before the hair has turned white about your brows!"

And with that the man vanished in the shadow of the bushes by the side of the lane.

IV

WILBERT'S STORY (EIGHTH CENTURY)

IT is but four years ago that I came to Jarrow. When I was about eight years of age there arrived at our house an old man, or so he seemed to me. Yet, though his hair was white and his hands withered and wrinkled, his eyes were almost as young as mine, very blue, and with a twinkle in them that spoke of mirth and joy. We were friends in a very short time, and, old as he was, he played my games with me, he ran and jumped, and shot with my bow and arrows till I was quite tired. Then he sat him down on a settle by the fire and said, "Wilbert, you have quite tired me out. Come here and I will tell you some true stories." So I went and sat at his feet, leaning my flaxen head against his knees, and he gently stroked my curls while he talked.

His stories were unlike any I had ever heard before. Some were about things he had actually seen, others were about people and places of which he had read, for he had a marvellous memory. I recollect there was a story about a bird flying into a lighted hall where people sat at meat. Out of the darkness it came, fluttered through the ruddy light, and passed again out into the night. "Thus," he said, "it is with the life of man. Wilbert, I'm just going out of the ruddy light through the further window ; you have only just entered through the first window. Do you see what I mean, little boy?" I remember that I said, "Yes," and, as I said the word, he shook his white head as though he only half believed me. There was another wonderful account of a little boy in a monastery, who fell grievously sick of a fever, but was cured by sitting close to Oswald's tomb. My mother and father and all of us children sat

and listened for hours as he told us these wonderful stories of the old days, of battles, of pilgrimages, of men and things.

When he left us the next morning he turned to me and said, "Wilbert, how old are you?" Mother said, "He will be eight just before Christmas." "Well, my friend, if you have nothing else for him to do, lend him to me when he is ten. I will teach him to read and write, and he can come home to you at times to tell you some of those stories over again. May he come?" My father and mother exchanged glances, and father said, "Yes, he may go. And may he live to be as good a man as his master." The old and gentle man shook his head sadly and said, "None of us are good save One; and we shall all see Him soon." Then he laid his old hands upon our heads, blessed us one by one, and so departed.

In two years' time, after the feast of Christmas, I said farewell to mother and my brothers and sisters, came with my father to this monastery, and asked for the priest Bede. When he saw us his face lit up. "Wilbert! So you have come to be the pupil of your old friend? I had to leave home when I was only seven to be trained by the reverend abbot, Benedict. You are three years older than I was." Then, turning to my father, he remarked, "It is cruel to send them from home too soon. Childhood comes only once and it is a holy thing."

So I settled down to my new life. Never did my teacher get angry with me; he was always patient, and loving, and gentle. I think I learned quickly. But he told me that he had always taken delight in learning, or teaching, or writing, and no doubt my rapid progress was due to his influence. But it was only for a few hours a day that he himself taught me, for I remember that he was always reading or writing. He did his duty as a priest and member of the monastery; he instructed me and the other youths; but in the early morning and late night he would sit working, working, working. Yet, as I have told you, he was merry and gay. Perhaps his greatest joy was to go to the services in the abbey. He said once to a friend, "I know the angels visit the

congregations of the brethren. What if they do not find me among the brethren. May they not say, 'Where is Bede?'"

How we all loved him ! To this day tears of joy come to my eyes when I think of my venerable master. Would that I had spent more years with him ! It was not to be ; for the work he did was too great for his strength, and he began to fade about three or four years after my admission to the monastery. As he grew weaker, it became necessary for some one to do his writing for him ; and to my joy he often chose me. In the middle of our task he would sometimes pause to ask after my father and mother, brothers and sisters. He knew their names as well as I did, and we talked together more like brothers than like master and scholar. Then we turned again to our tasks. I knew now what these were. He was just pouring out all his wealth of knowledge and learning for the sake of the brethren, that they might read, after he had gone, all the wonderful things he had taken so much trouble to learn about the Church in England. He was one of the great men of the earth. Small, mean men toil for themselves ; great, generous souls spend themselves for others. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," was constantly upon his lips. So he toiled day by day.

It was in the merry springtide of the year A.D. 735 that the end came. Our master had for some time past been troubled with his breathing. As I sat and wrote for him, he would often pause with his hand pressed to his side and a spasm of pain would pass over his face. Then with a smile he would say, "Now we can go on, Wilbert." And with my face turned from him, so that he should not see my tears, I would write down his words. This had continued from Easter till the day of our Lord's Ascension, namely, the 26th day of May. Never once in all that time did he cease daily to give us our lessons, and when he was not with us he sang the psalms as usual, and spent much of the night joyfully in prayer and thanksgiving. Once, as he came to the words, "Leave us not comfortless," he burst into tears and wept much, till we, hearing him, mourned and wept also. At length, drying

his tears, he said, "God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. I have not so lived as to be ashamed to live among you; but neither do I fear to die, because we have a merciful Lord."

On the Tuesday he suffered still more in his breathing, and his feet swelled, so that he had to lie on his couch. But he went on teaching all that day, and dictating cheerfully; and among other things he said, "Learn quickly; I know not how long I shall endure, and whether my Maker will not soon take me away." And so he spent the night.

The dawn broke, flooding the sky with its pure, glad light. As the day came he bade us write with speed, and this we did till the third hour, till it was time for us to walk in procession. I said to him, "There is still one chapter wanting of the book thou hast been dictating, but I deem it burdensome for thee to be questioned any further." He answered, "Nay, it is light; take thy pen and make ready and write quickly." I did so till the ninth hour. Then he paused and said to Cuthbert, "I have certain treasures in my coffer—spices, napkins, and incense; run quickly and bring the priests of our monastery to me, that I may distribute among them the gifts which God has bestowed on me." Then came together the priests, and he spoke to them every one as they mourned and wept around him. When he had spoken he said, "I have lived long; the time of my release is at hand; my soul longs to see Christ my King in His beauty."

He lay quietly till the evening. Then he raised his head and, looking about him, at last his eyes fell on me and he smiled. "Wilbert!" he whispered, laying his dear hands on mine. "Yes, master," I said; "what do you wish?" "Did we finish our task?" "Nay, dear master, there is yet one sentence not written." He answered, "It is well; write it." Soon after I said, "Now, it is written"; and he said, "It is well. Thou hast said truly, it is finished. Take my head in thy hands, for I rejoice greatly to sit facing my holy place where I was wont to pray, that I too, sitting there, may call upon my Father." And thus this great and good man, my dear old master, on the

pavement of his little cell, chanted "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," and so fell asleep.

It is many years ago that I sat thus and saw him die. I was only a young boy then; now I, too, am old; but I thank God that from this noble man and learned, I drew not merely the learning of this earth but the knowledge of those higher things which are known to but a few. While I sat by his side as he lay dead, I vowed, if I were spared, that I would strive to live as he lived and die as he died, unsparing of self, living for others, serving God, and doing good. In many things I have failed; but the thought of his goodness has ever urged me to higher and nobler things; for the memory of a good man is the best gift God can offer us.

V

KING ALFRED AND OHTHERE (NINTH CENTURY)

PERHAPS they met in that one-storied house of wood perched on the hill-top near the Thames.

It was strongly built of thick logs, fastened together by iron bands, and clustered round it were various smaller buildings, or bowers. The central part, or the hall, as men called it, had a doorway with an arched porch, on which was carved the shape of a horse. For defensive purposes an earthen rampart surrounded the bleached wooden buildings, and the approach was by means of rough steps carved out of the chalky hill. By day the light did not flatter the clumsy edifice, and it looked grey and weather-beaten; but, as the Norwegian seaman and his comrades came towards the doorway, the sun was setting, and its level light painted the logs with rich colours, and the old roof flashed rosy red.

The King stood waiting, calm and dignified; his fair hair lay upon his shoulders; his hand rested lightly upon a short, straight sword girded to his side. The blue eyes that shone so fiercely in battle were now peaceful and gentle, and his lips were parted in a smile. His tunic was of bright green cloth reaching to his knees, and a brown cloak edged with fur was fastened across his chest by a brooch of fine gold. His hose was bound crossways with strips of red leather. Round about him under the porch stood several ladies accompanied by nobles ready to obey their King's commands.

As the giant sailor came near voices were hushed, and the King advanced to meet his guests. Ohthere stepped out before the others, and bent over the King's out-

stretched hand. He had heard of this wise and warlike sovereign, of his interest in ships, and respected him, not merely as a king, but as a man. He himself was a man of splendid frame. A poet has thus described him to us:—

His figure was tall and stately,
Like a boy's his eye appeared;
His hair was as yellow as hay,
But threads of a silvery grey
Gleamed in his tawny beard.

Hearty and hale was Ohthere,
His cheek had the colour of oak;
With a kind of laugh in his speech,
Like the sea-tide on a beach,
As unto the King he spoke.

They stood and talked for some time, and then, as the light was fading rapidly, they all passed through the doorway into the interior of the house. A fire of logs was burning in the centre of the earthen floor, and the pungent white smoke rose in a straight pillar to spread curling in and out of the blackened oak beams of the roof till it found its way out of the hole which did duty for a chimney. Tapestry hangings were drawn across the open spaces, or windows, and, when the door was closed and barred, the hall, lighted with tallow torches, assumed quite a comfortable appearance. Servants brought water for the guests to wash their hands and feet, and then King, nobles, ladies, and guests gathered round the board to partake of the plentiful meal which was now served by the steward and his assistants. Mead, ale, and wine were drunk as pledges, and, when all were satisfied and the tables cleared, King Alfred turned towards his guest, and asked him to tell them all about his famous voyage; for he had come for that purpose. This was the wonderful Ohthere, of whom King Alfred wrote, and so gave to all time the account of the Norwegian who had doubled the North Cape, entered the White Sea, and come again to tell the world of his exploits—an adventurous voyage for those days, and made in one of those old viking ships, whose long, curved beaks still delight us in pictures with their slender, graceful lines. The King, his nobles, and

their ladies were assembled to do honour to this early explorer of the great, white, silent North.

Ohthere rose and told his tale simply. He said that of all Northmen he dwelt the northmost in the land that lay along the Western Sea. Beyond him lived the Finns, who hunted in winter and fished in summer. One day there came to him the desire to discover how far the land reached northward, and whether people lived in that cold country. Accordingly, he fitted out and loaded his ship, and then he and his men sailed away as far as the whale-hunters go. They went on to the dreary north for three more days, and found that the land by that time turned eastward. He waited till they got a north-west wind, and sailed for four days till the land bent to the south. After another five days' sailing he came to a great river, but he dared not go beyond it for fear of the people there. He had seen Finns and other folk as he had voyaged along, but these were strange people to him, and he wished to avoid hostilities. The poet Longfellow says that Ohthere told Alfred how in those northern latitudes the sun did not set by night :—

“Four days I steered to Eastward,
Four days without a night;
Round in a fiery ring
Went the great sun, O King,
With red and lurid light.”

Here Alfred, King of the Saxons,
Ceased writing for a while;
And raised his eyes from his book
With a strange and puzzled look,
And an incredulous smile.

But Ohthere, the old sea captain,
He neither paused nor stirred,
Till the King listened, and then
Once more took up his pen,
And wrote down every word.

Ohthere told how he had hunted the walrus and the whale. As witness of the truth of what he was saying, namely, that some of the whales were ninety-six feet long, perhaps even a hundred, and that he and his sailors killed threescore in two days and dragged them to the shore, he stretched forth his hand and showed in his

grasp a walrus tooth. He had brought some of these teeth as a present for King Alfred.

All this time every one had sat in utter silence. The story seemed so impossible. No one had ever been to such places before and brought back such news. Who was this man? What sort of standing had he in his own land? Was he just an adventurer out to make gain by such wonderful stories? Perhaps Alfred asked him some such questions. At any rate, the old sailor went on to tell them how he was a very wealthy man in his own native country. He had as many as six hundred tame deer, twenty horned cattle, twenty sheep, twenty swine, and he ploughed his land with horses. His people gained their wealth from the tribute paid them by the Finns, in the shape of skins, feathers, whalebone, and ship ropes made from the hides of whales or seals. The land he lived in was called Halgoland, and to the south there was a port called Sciringes-heal (Skiringssalr). To reach it took at least a whole month's sailing, even if men watched by night, and had fair winds by day. The course of the voyage ran along the coast; to the steerboard was Ireland, and the islands between Ireland and England; to the left lay Norway.

Possibly his knowledge of geography, in spite of his voyages, was not as accurate as yours; but he was a fine, brave seaman, and his tale deserved to live for ever. How many such adventures have been undertaken by men who never returned to tell the tale? No doubt King Alfred was greatly astonished; but he loved to collect accounts of all kinds, and another sailor, named Wulfstan, gave him the narrative of another voyage which the King wrote down for us.

We should all have liked to see that scene in the hall. Perhaps the poet has seen it as clearly as anyone can in imagination. After Ohthere has described the hunting and killing of the whales, the poem says:—

Here Alfred, the Truth-teller,
Suddenly closed his book,
And lifted his blue eyes,
With doubt and strange surmise
Depicted in their look,

And Ohthere, the old sea-captain,
Stared at him wild and weird,
Then smiled, till his shining teeth
Gleamed white from underneath
His tawny, quivering beard.

And to the King of the Saxons,
In witness of the truth,
Raising his noble head,
He stretched his brown hand, and said,
“Behold this walrus-tooth!”

VI

LONDON BRIDGE IS BROKEN DOWN (1008)

BEORNWULF lay among the osiers on the south side of the Thames, at no great distance from London Bridge. His father, a fisherman, who lived in a hovel two miles eastward on the flats, under the sandy cliffs, had warned him never to venture near the great Danish camp at Bankside, but to-day, when, as all men knew, the Saxons and their allies, the Summer sailors from Norway, purposed to make an attack on the Danish pirates, the boy had cautiously crept so far from home in order to see the battle.

Opposite to him, against the northern bank, the long English ships and the Norwegian birlinns rode between head and stern fasts on a falling tide. Beyond them on the left rose the brown fortifications, built centuries ago by the men of Rome on the spot where, many, many years after, in his old age, Beornwulf was to see the pale castle of the Norman tyrants' tower, menacing London town. West of the fortifications rose the walls of the city, enclosing the crowded roofs of the houses and the towers of churches. In front of the city, straddling on massy piles across the grey river, stretched the huge wooden bulk of the Bridge.

The lad's eyes rested eagerly on the fleet against the green northern flats. Never had he seen craft so strangely hampered! From stem to stern of most of the vessels, and projecting beyond the scantling, rose strong wooden beams like a roof-ridge, strengthened by osier-work and rafters, to furnish which many a river-side house, among them that of their neighbour Leof, had been destroyed. By such a device, so the boy had heard, Olaf, Prince of

Norway, the English King's ally, trusted to shelter his men from the stones which the Danish men, fearing an attack, had piled upon the Bridge.

As he crouched among the osiers, horns sounded on board the fleet; shouts rang across the river, moorings were cast off, heavy oars beat the rushing water, and one by one the ships drew out into mid-channel, where they floated thick as sea-fowl on the reaches down-stream; but their array was so orderly that it was a delight to the boy to see how well they were handled.

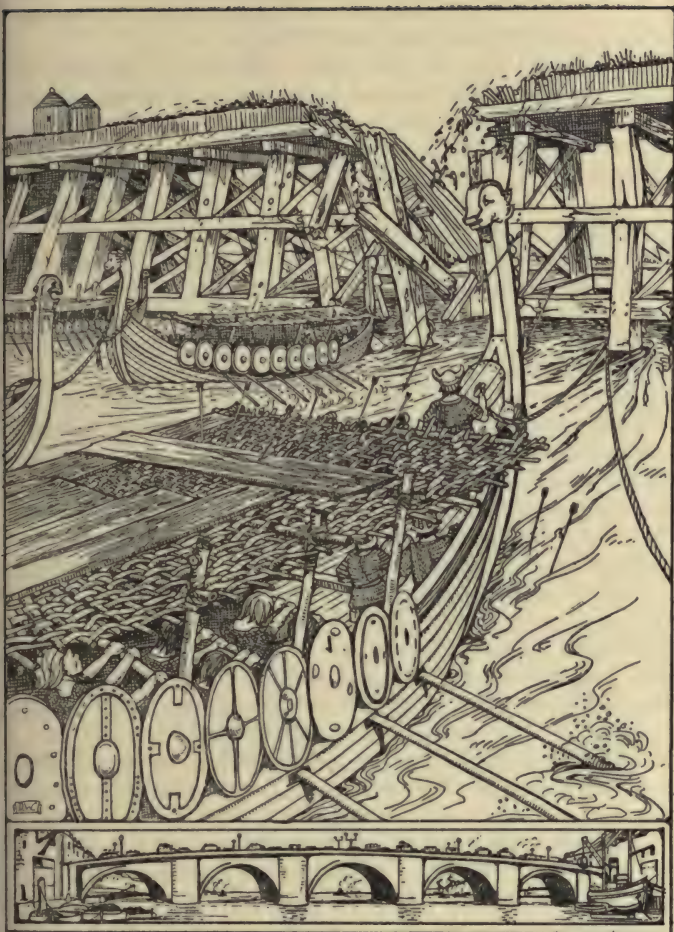
The tide was now setting outwards fast, drawing in long, gurgling folds through the osiers, and the crews could only keep station by steady pulling at the sweeps. Again horns bellowed, and the whole fleet began to move up-river, slowly but steadily against the current, the oars bending like bow-staves at every stroke.

Creeping along the bank, Beornwulf advanced with them towards the Bridge. When he drew level with the Roman works on the opposite shore, he mounted a hillock, and looked down on Bankside and Southwark.

The Danish men had dug a great ditch about the southern end of the Bridge and behind Bankside. This channel was so wide and deep that at full water their ships could ride on it. They had thrown up the earth into a high bank, on which they had built a stockade of wood, strengthened with large stones. Out of this half-circle of fortifications, the great Bridge stretched across the river.

On either side of the massive wooden causeway the enemy had raised bulwarks of logs. They had also constructed a number of towers, behind the breast-works of which glittered the weapons and winged helmets of the defenders. Fearing an attack by water on their camp at Southwark, which was the key to their occupation of London, they had collected a store of huge stones, heaping them upon the towers and the movable platforms that in times of peace were raised to allow the passage of sailing ships beyond the Bridge.

The great structure was crowded with fighting men, and on the river beyond Beornwulf saw boat after boat



LONDON BRIDGE IS BROKEN DOWN



crammed with armed men put off from the jetties of London to strengthen the defence.

By this time the attacking fleet was within a hawser's length of the Bridge. Here they halted, keeping station with steady strokes. The leaders, glittering in byrnies, moved forward to the bows, and the shields along the bulwarks were hoisted higher to protect the rowers from the arrows which snowed whistling down from the bowmen above.

When the fleet halted, a mocking roar swept from the Bridge, bringing a tingle of angry blood into Beornwulf's face; the sound was so fell and outlandish, like the cry of carrion gulls tossed upon the wind.

But, even as he looked, horns echoed from the leading craft, oars crashed in time, and the first two lines of ships scrambled forward, as it were on countless legs, right up to the Bridge. Instantly the whole huge structure shook with activity; a grey storm of arrows swept down on the vessels, transfixing many a rower; a ponderous rush of stones hurtled on the wooden screens, shattering them, splintering the decks, and crushing most of the men clustered upon them. The silence of the river was shaken by the sound of yielding timber, and by the cries of the wounded.

The boy, leaping up in his excitement, saw two of the attacking vessels settle by the bows; the water spouted up and closed on them; armed men leapt overboard from the sinking craft; hands thrust wildly out of the foam and clutched in vain at the threshing oars; human shapes were ground by the current against the heaving hulls and disappeared.

At once other ships filled up the gaps in the line. Again the stones descended, but this time several of the attacking craft had rowed right under the Bridge, to the piers of which they fastened great grappling hooks attached to cables. Horns rang out exultantly, ten-score oars plunged blade-deep in the foam and tossed up the spray to the defenders, as the boats shot fifty paces down-stream, drawing the hawsers taut. At the same time ropes were thrown from other vessels and

made fast to the leaders. Then the whole squadron, swept down-stream by oar and tide, drew on the cables straining the piers of the Bridge.

With fierce joy Beornwulf watched the long grey mass rock and moan like a living thing; with a dreadful crash it fell asunder into a drift of tossing timber, among which, clinging like insects, hundreds of Danes were swept to death in the foam below. For a short time the river was a welter of wreckage littered with struggling figures, whom the men of the fleet shot and speared without pity, till the stream was streaked with scarlet threads of blood. From the English and Norwegian vessels rose the sound of harping and strange ancient war chants of victory.

A hoarse noise startled the Saxon boy.

Out of the osiers, dripping, and stained with ooze, splashed a huge, rough-haired Dane, dashing the muddy water from his beard, and looking about him with fierce eyes, his hand on a curved knife at his belt.

Beornwulf fled and never halted till he reached his father's hovel on the green flats under the sandstone cliffs, past which the river whirled broken timbers and white-faced Danish dead. These the river-side people pursued in boats, stripping such as wore gold on arms or neck. And to them not long after came the joyful news that, cut off from their comrades on the northern bank, the Danes at Bankside had surrendered; whereupon the pirates in London, losing heart, had opened the city gates and yielded the city to King Ethelred the Unready.

VII

THE MAKING OF *DOMESDAY BOOK* (ELEVENTH CENTURY)

BY a lonely road in a valley of the Chilterns stood the house of Leofric, a villein. Behind it lay about half a virgate of ploughland, bounded by a stream, beyond which the woods gathered sharply into heights, crested here and there by pale, bare uplands.

The hut was a poor structure of timber and wattle plastered with clay and thatched with reeds. Through the open door one could see the interior, lime-washed to keep down vermin. The floor was of clay, beaten hard, and, in the middle, on a hearth of flat stones, a wood fire smouldered, the grey smoke of which coiled upwards to an opening in the roof.

The furniture was scanty—a rough table, a few chairs, and a settle, all of oak or beech fashioned with axe and saw. On the walls hung spades, sickles, and other tools, coarse clothes of frieze or leather, and a bacon-rack; a large tub of brine filled with salt meat stood in a corner. To the right and left were gloomy sleeping-apartments, containing the beds, wooden frames, filled with straw or dry leaves over which rough woollen coverings were spread. The pillows were merely logs of wood stripped of their bark.

In the back part of the house, adjoining the living-rooms, was the byre for the cattle. Here also were quartered the small lean fowls that wandered familiarly through the open door in search of food. Hard by, on the right, were the sties and the unsavoury mixen, over which the swarming flies hummed in the sunshine.

Under one of the stunted apple trees that grew in

an enclosure between the house and the ploughland sat Leofric weaving baskets. By his side sat his wife, carding wool. Not far from them on a stool sat their youngest son, Martin, a novice and scribe at the neighbouring abbey. The sunshine falling through the tangle of boughs overhead chequered his pale, thoughtful face bent over an illuminated book, the young scribe's last masterpiece.

It seemed a peaceful group, but it was manifestly uneasy, and their eyes often wandered across the barley field, where three men were busy with lines and measuring staves.

One was a tall, ruffianly fellow, dressed in green, with a dagger at his hip; the second, a stout, middle-aged man in blue; the third, a youth clothed in a black gown trimmed with vair and wearing a hood. In his hand he held a wooden tablet, on which a piece of parchment was spread, and every now and then he wrote upon it with a reed dipped in an ink-horn that hung from his girdle.

Having made the round of the field and of an adjoining wood, the three approached the house.

The tall man in green, speaking in very halting Saxon, addressed Leofric.

"Hark you, villein! What is the whole value of this land?"

"Five shillings."

"How can that be, knave, when we know it was seven shillings in King Edward's days?"

"Seven shillings it was, indeed, and if it hath fallen, you Normans best know why."

The tall man replied with an oath, but the youth with the tablet checked him.

"Let be, Oswald! I'll warrant he speaks the truth, for I am country-bred, whereas you are but a guardroom whelp and know little of these things. Let us proceed to the byre."

They looked in at the two cows and the plough ox, small, lean beasts, as cattle were commonly in England then, and examined the empty sties.

"How many hogs have you, churl?" asked Oswald, "and where be they?"

"Half a score have I, and they be in the woods for pannage with my son Gurth; thence they will return at sunfall."

"Till which time we will await them here," said Oswald, "and, by this poniard, you shall in the meanwhile set meat and drink before us. Look you too that it be such as a Norman can eat."

He strode into the house, followed by the company.

"A rare place!" he mocked, flinging himself into a settle. "By St. Peter, these English swine house themselves no better than their hogs!"

"But these English swine," said Martin the monk quietly, "would scorn so to affront those whose bread they eat."

Oswald looked at him insolently, with menacing eyes.

"The Saxon brother speaks not amiss!" said the Norman clerk, "and you are well rebuked, friend Oswald! Come, come, man, bridle your tongue, for I will be no party to ill-manners."

"By the light of God," answered Oswald, "I know not, Sir Clerk, why I should endure such speech from you; and I swear that I will give yonder churl a taste of my belt, if his beldame does not set meat and drink before us very briskly."

Leofric's wife, motioning her husband to silence, laid the table with wooden platters, and set before the company bread, cheese, ale, and mead, but the green-clothed ruffian swore he must in addition have a dish of eggs.

"I pray you do so, good woman," said the clerk, "for our friend is a furious trencherman, and for what we eat I will pay reasonably."

He then turned to Martin, and inquired of him civilly what author he had been studying. When he found that this was no other than that excellent writer, Virgil, he professed his pleasure at meeting a learned man, and fell into a discussion about the magic that was contained in the works of the great Roman.

Profiting by the Norman's courtesy, Martin asked, as a favour, whether he might see what the clerk had written concerning Leofric's holding.

"By all means," said the Norman, and handed him the parchment.

On it he read as follows :—

Leofric, villein.

Land, one half virgate. One plough. Meadows also sufficient to one plough; one might be made. Wood for the hedges. Half a stream, two shillings. Pasture for half a score hogs and sevenpence. Two cows, one draught ox, ten hogs.

Payments. One quarter of seed-wheat at Michaelmas; one peck of wheat, 3 bushels of oats, 4 hens on Nov. 12th.

Services; to plough one half acre of the lord's land and three days labour at harvest. Land worth five shillings; in King Edward's time, seven shillings.

"I thank you, sir," he said, "for your fairness."

"It gives me pleasure to hear you say so," answered the clerk, "and truly your mother's dish of eggs is excellent. Commend me to her, I pray you."

By this time Oswald, who had been drinking heavily of both ale and mead, had grown boisterous and yet more insolent. He vowed he would no longer abide in so filthy a hovel, and, seizing a horn of liquor, sat down on a bench by the door, roaring out snatches of Norman songs.

As he sang, a troop of horsemen came slowly along the road. At their head was a bulky man, not merely tall, but also so deep and broad in the chest, and so ponderous of limb, that the company, who had been drawn to the door by the sound of hoofs, stood amazed.

The sunset lay red on the rider's face, lighting up his high features, his fierce eyes, heavy, clean-shaven jaw, and harsh mouth, over which a ruddy moustache bristled. As he passed the cottage the rider suddenly drew up short, and, with a snarl of fury, called out in French to Oswald :—

"Knave, come hither!"

The drunkard, sobered by that fierce voice, stumbled to his feet.

"Come hither!" roared the rider. "Nay, come close! So! Now, tell me what make you here?"

"If it please you, my lord," whispered Oswald, "I am here with yonder two gentlemen to survey the land for King William."

Stooping, the giant caught the wretch by the neck with one hand, and, standing in the stirrups, lifted him up, shook him like a puppet with so fell a grip that Oswald's eyes seemed like to burst from their sockets.

The rider flung the ruffian to the ground.

"By the splendour of God," he said in low, rolling tones, "think you I will suffer a drunken sot upon my business? Provost, take this fellow behind you, and, when we halt, bestow on him two dozen lashes of the best."

Those at the door silently watched the train clatter out of sight among the woods.

"Know you who that was?" said the Norman clerk at last, very ashen of countenance.

"A man," answered Leofric slowly, "and a king indeed! A terrible prince, but just. Now, in truth, I do not marvel that, within so short a space, he laid England at his feet."

VIII

A DAY'S HUNTING IN THE NEW FOREST

(1100)

THE warm August sunlight, sweet with the scent of unnumbered leaves, lay full on the clearing in the New Forest, in which stood the cottage of Gurth, the swineherd. It was a little round hovel built of branches and turf, and capped by a thatch of bracken—a structure so simple that it seemed a part of its wild surroundings.

In the large round chamber which formed the interior, Gurth's wife was busy at the kneading trough. Out of a small door that led into a low storeroom on the right came Gurth himself with a bag of acorns and a bucket of swine-mash. Followed by Hilda, their only child, a sturdy, flaxen-haired girl of ten, he passed behind the cottage into a little garth, where a few vegetables grew, protected by a close fence of stakes from the nibblers of the forest. Here were some rough sties, which shook with excited gruntings as they approached.

"Aye, they are hungry, poor shrews!" said Gurth, "but to-day they must not go loose, for I have had word that the Red King, that evil man, rides hither a-hunting. Should they chance to meet him they would be scattered, or, belike, wantonly slain, while the Norman sits in his saddle laughing. Tell your mother that, till nightfall, I shall be abroad with Watkin the forester, and look you, child, that you do not wander far in the forest this day lest harm befall you."

He kissed Hilda, took his axe, his bow and arrows, half a loaf, and a piece of bacon, and walked off into the glittering greenwood.

Hilda's mother bade her come in and stir the pottage which bubbled in an iron pot hung on hakes, or iron chains, above the wood-fire in the centre of the living-room. It was dark and close within; outside the light flickered on the woods, tempting the child to wander among them.

When the pottage was ready, they ate it out of beechen platters with wooden spoons, dipping their bread in the savoury mess.

"And now, my maid," said her mother, giving Hilda a basket, "you shall fare into the forest, and see if you can find raspberries, for I hear that Astrida, the wife of the verderer, would gladly buy some. Though a Norman, she has a kind heart and pays liberally. But, mark me, you must not go far from the house, for you heard what your father said. Here are two girdle-cakes and a flask of milk, against the time you feel hungry. Return when you have picked the basket full, and to-morrow, betimes, you must fare with them to the lady, for you have some skill of their language of which I can make nothing."

Hilda promised obedience, and her mother watched her disappear into the greenness of the woods.

The broad afternoon light fell hot and golden on the trees, drawing sweetness from the great towers of foliage. Hilda knew every handsbreadth of the forest for miles around, and, plunging into the undergrowth, soon discovered raspberry bushes, and fell to picking, but the fruit was not plentiful, and when, some two hours after, she sat down on the grass to eat her girdle-cakes, the basket was barely one-quarter full.

She remembered how, last year, she had eaten her fill and picked many a frail of the berries in the Stag's Dell, which lay no great distance to west. The way to it was rough, to be sure, but the child was fearless and her sturdy little legs unwearied, so she set out at a round pace.

All around her the forest drowsed peacefully. Now and again some woodland creature snapped cautiously through the undergrowth; overhead, high in the sunshine, on open wings hovered a great hawk, flashing like the bird of brass that supported the Gospels in the abbey church.

By and by, her forest-bred sense was aware of a strange uneasiness in the quiet green world about her. The undergrowth seemed alive with startled creatures; a great stag, crashing through the bushes, sprang right over her and fled. Faintly, but clearly, the noise of shouting and the baying of hounds came to her across the drowsy stillness. The sounds drew nearer; she halted, peering through the bushes.

Before her was a broad clearing. The light of the setting sun steeped it in golden haze, out of which flamed the fronds of bracken.

On the farther side of the clearing, in the shadow of an oak, stood four horsemen in green; dogs yelped and quessed round them. By the richness of their clothing and by the beauty of their horses, she knew that the two foremost riders must be great nobles.

One was tall and dark, the other shorter, but immensely deep in the chest and powerful of limb. His face was purple, swollen, and blotched, the lips mocking and cruel, the hair, cut close in the Norman fashion, fiery red, and two bristling tufts flamed like copper on his upper lip. The feather in his cap was clasped in a heavy brooch of gold.

By this Hilda, with a shrivelling heart, guessed that she saw before her the dreadful Red King, of whose fierceness and crimes she had heard so many gruesome tales.

Behind her rose a huge hollow oak. She crept to it on hands and knees, climbed nimbly as a squirrel up the black, wrinkled interior till she reached the fork, some fifteen feet above the ground. Here, cradled in the junction of two great limbs, she lay flat, peering through the screen of foliage.

The words of the horsemen rang clear in the stillness. Hilda had often aided in the kitchen of the Lady Astrida, and understood the French tongue well, though she had little skill in speaking it.

The harsh voice of the Red King jarred across the clearing:—

“By the fury of God, this is my rede! We have so outpaced the others that the stag is not far. I saw him pass yonder clean spent, even now. Hark you, therefore.

Jocelyn and Rolf shall ride ahead, one to the right and the other to the left, with all the pack, save Tracker and Holdfast. They will rouse the buck and drive him back hither. You, Sir Walter, shall remain here. I will to yonder oak. When he chases past us, let fly at him together, and the curse of Heaven on him who misses. Thereafter, at once slip we the two hounds and we have him beyond doubt. Now to work! Sessa!"

The party broke up; the two huntsmen scoured ahead with the dogs; the King with one hound took up his station under a tree, not far from Hilda's perch. Here Rufus dismounted, tied his horse to the tree, and drew an arrow to the head.

The child, looking down, saw the two Normans standing statue-still, each with a bent bow and a hound straining at the leash; saw also in the undergrowth, not fifty yards from the King, a third bowman, in coarse frieze, with drawn weapon, and knew him for dumb Jenkin, whose tongue the Red King had caused to be torn out at Winchester a year ago for speaking ill of the Normans.

Then came a volley of distant baying, a rush, and a tall stag bounded down the glade. Three bows twanged, the buck leapt high with an arrow through his neck, scrambled to his feet, and stumbled on, a fierce hound on either haunch. Sir Walter sprang out bow in hand, halted suddenly, and then ran forward, stone-white of face, towards the place where, under the oak, the Red King lay on his back, an arrow through his breast.

The child saw the knight stand by the body like a man dazed, then run to his horse and, leaping into the saddle, thunder down a glade.

As the sound of the hoofs died away, the archer in frieze crept out of the undergrowth to the side of the dead man, stooped over him, spurned him with his foot, and slunk shadow-like into the shadows.

The hours passed; crouching in her hiding-place, Hilda sobbed herself to quiet.

The sun, now low over the tree-tops, shone full on the dead man. Flies hummed about the grey, purple face and settled on the staring eyes.

Slowly out of the stillness a light sound grew; creaking along the forest ways a charcoal-burner's cart appeared. One man lay among the sacks; the other led the horse. The cart came to a standstill; the driver approached the corpse, and called in a sharp, startled voice to his mate. For a while the two stood looking down at the motionless shape, with bared heads, praying and crossing themselves. Then they made room in the cart, raised the stiff figure, laid it among the sacks, covered it over with bracken, and drove off. At every jolt the legs of the Red King jerked hideously in time.

The stars were out over the forest when Hilda reached the hovel.

They would have scolded her, but forbore, because of her white face.

She told them what she had seen.

"It is the hand of God," said her father; "let Him be the judge. Therefore, take heed! Not a word of this to any living soul, till the hair be white upon your head."

IX

A NORMAN LADY AND HER TAPESTRY (TWELFTH CENTURY)

WHEN Count Eudo, riding with the huntsmen across the drawbridge, had passed out of sight into the shadow of the deep woods below, in which the morning sunlight made golden pools beneath the oaks and beeches, the Lady Eleanor turned under the great gate of the castle and mounted the winding stone stairs to her apartment.

This was on the third floor of one of the massive towers. Three windows lighted it, great openings, very broad within, but narrowing at the outer end. So thick were the walls that each window was like a long room, raised above the floor of the apartment from which three stone steps led to it. The windows were heavily barred with iron, and unglazed. When the wind blew bitter with brine across the weald from the sea, heavy shutters closed them, but to-day these stood open, admitting the brilliant sunlight. Between the windows the walls of the room were hung with tapestries of grey canvas, on which, in coloured wools, were worked designs representing the twelve months, by means of pictures of the labours of the field, scenes of ploughing, sheep-shearing, sowing, and husbandry, vividly drawn and executed.

The floor of the great chamber was strewn with fresh green rushes from the river that fed the castle moat. On it stood a table, chairs, and settles of oak, and several embroidery frames covered with unbleached canvas. Overhead, on swinging perches, sat two merlins, or small hawks, one of which was pecking a piece of raw flesh that he held in his claws. He tore it to pieces with his

curved beak, flapping his wings with cries of joy as he fed. When the Lady Eleanor entered, several girls were busily working at the frames, filling in with coloured wool and thread the patterns traced upon them. They were dressed in flowing robes of brown, grey, and green cloth, with wide hanging sleeves, and gathered in at the waist by embroidered girdles. On their heads they wore coifs or veils, or high capes of starched white linen, laced and pleated after the Norman fashion.

The Lady Eleanor herself was similarly clothed, but in fine cloth of a rich blue, embroidered with silver thread. About her waist was a girdle of silver inset with turquoise stones. A band of gold braid encircled her coif, and many costly rings glittered on her fingers.

She went up the steps into one of the windows, and looked out on the weald that fell away below in great green and blue waves of hill to the hazy south where, beyond the glitter of the sea, lay Normandy, with its apple orchards and russet-coloured towers clustering about castles, and vast churches, which, rising on massive columns and round arches, seemed with their square towers as stern as the cold castles themselves.

Would she ever see her country again? Patience! Her husband had promised her that in the autumn she should accompany him thither, when he visited his fief at Falaise.

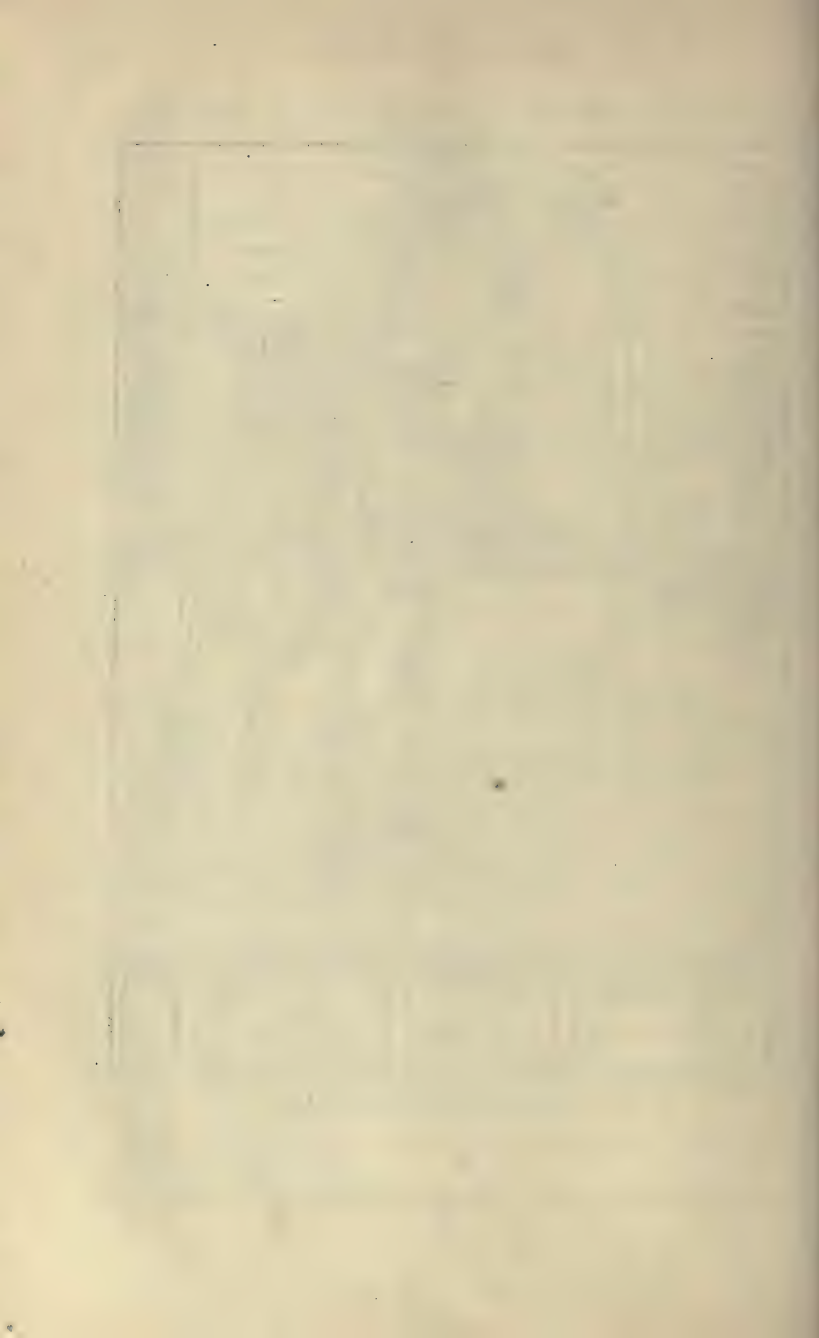
She sighed, and bade one of her maidens bring up into the window a chair and an embroidery frame. Sitting there, she could supervise the work of her attendants, who were busy filling in the borders of tapestries with simple patterns of flowers and fruit.

The lady herself was engaged on a cloth for the altar of the castle chapel. It represented the Adoration of the Magi. Her brother, a monk, and a limner, or painter of missals, in the great abbey near Fécamp, had traced the design for her, on his last visit, when returning to Normandy from London, whither he had travelled in the train of the abbot to a meeting of bishops at Peter's Church in Westminster.

Carefully selecting and matching her colours, she worked



THE NORMAN LADY IN HER HALL



at the blue robes of the Holy Mother. As she stitched, she thought with longing of the wonderful, glossy thread that, years ago, she had seen in a choice tapestry in France—the work of nuns in a convent in the great Empire of Byzant. They had told her that this soft, glittering thread came from a vast country in the East, far beyond Persia, and that it was produced by worms that fed on the leaves of the mulberry tree; also that these worms were difficult to rear, though the inhabitants of that far country, heathen men yellow of skin, were rare weavers and embroiderers, so that, though they were pestilent idolaters, they wove ravishing stuffs. But, as for the thread, to which the Jewish traders gave the name of silk, it was worth a hundred times its weight in gold, and indeed could not be procured, so that the Holy Mother must needs be content with fine wool.

The lady, however, was consoled by the thought that she had adorned the Heavenly Queen with a crown of golden thread; nor indeed could she have done less, having so honoured one of the Three Kings, a black-amoor, whose head, skilfully worked in jetty wool, wore a diadem of gold; and of gold also was the casket which his swarthy hands proffered the Holy Child, smiling in His Mother's lap.

Heartened by these reflections, she worked on with fine, deft stitches, only pausing now and again to inspect the work of her maidens, chiding the sluggards and praising the diligent and skilful, one of whom, Isabel, a tall, dark girl, rivalled her very self in workmanship, no mean accomplishment, for in all Sussex and Normandy there was no better embroiderer than the Countess.

Stitch by stitch the Holy Mother grew out of the canvas, the golden, many-pointed crown clasping the delicate head, the long, oval face with its large eyes looking so lovingly, yet worshipfully, at the Divine Babe, and bent over it very humbly, for all the pomp of the proud diadem, the slim hands supporting the precious burden, the robe falling in stiff folds about the sharp feet.

Below her the girls whispered discreetly as they worked

at their frames; the sunlight crept across the floor and faded as the sun travelled across the sky; but the Lady Eleanor, absorbed in her work, never heeded the passing of time.

By and by an old seneschal announced the midday meal, to which she dismissed the girls, bidding some refreshment to be brought up to her on a salver.

The maidens, returning, found their mistress still busy at the frame. Later a page came up, and read to them passages from the *Voyage de Charlemagne*, and sang to the lute.

So the afternoon wore quietly away; the shadows in the chamber deepened, and vesper bells tolled faintly from the plain, awakening the deep notes of the bell in the castle chapel, where Father Blaise was at the altar. At last the Countess laid by her work and sat before her frame, silent and content. Surely the Blessed Mother must be well pleased also; and if the Lady Eleanor was touched with pride, the sin would be forgiven her. A few more weeks, and the tapestry, in all its splendour of gold and colour, would hang round the chapel altar under the twinkling candles.

With a sigh of satisfaction the Countess bade her maidens remove the frame and the basket of wool and thread. Then she slowly descended from the window, just as the baying of dogs and the mellow sound of horns announced Count Eudo's return from the chase.

X

A JEWISH HOME IN YORK (1150)

LITTLE Isaac and his two young sisters, Miriam and Zillah, children of Eleazar the rich Jewish merchant of York, were greatly excited; for a cousin of their father had recently come to them from Aleppo in Syria, and the Passover feast would be celebrated that evening with very great ceremony.

Their house, strongly built against attack and very plain outside, was beautifully appointed within. On the third floor was a large room, whose narrow windows looked out across the roofs upon the huge mass of the cathedral. Here, secure from the prying eyes of neighbours, they were wont to celebrate their religious festivals.

The children, old beyond their years with the precociousness of Eastern races, showed a strange seriousness, due not merely to the dread of persecution, but to a knowledge far removed from that of their little Christian neighbours. Whereas to these the world and its cities were either unknown or fabled places, about which the wildest tales were told, to Isaac and his sisters all Europe, North Africa, Western Asia, and their towns were familiar; for they had relatives in many of these great cities, and to their father's house came, almost daily, travellers of their own race, who brought them news of many towns and lands.

Through their abode, as through many Jewish houses, flowed a perpetual, living stream of life; the business of the known and even of the unknown world rolled there its ringing current; the dark woof of their perilous life was made bright by threads of gold from sunlit countries, and of silver from the frozen lands of the North. Bagdad,

the city of the Caliphs, Byzant, the capital of the Greek emperors, Granada with its fairy palace, Nuremberg of Germany with its dreadful secret societies and its fairs filled with Eastern wares and spices, equally with the bustling Hanse cities of the Baltic—were made familiar to the children by the presence of men who dwelt in them, and whose outlandish garments were scented with their strange flavour.

It was, however, not with reports of the marvels of strange lands that their imaginations were kindled, but with the stories of wonder contained in the Talmud: tales of miracles, of magic, of the virtues of jewels, of the angels Sandalphon and Azrael; of the wisdom of rabbis, of their defiance of kings, and of the subtle riddles they propounded. Some of these tales they would surely hear this evening.

As soon as it was dark, their mother and aunt prepared the great hall, closing the wooden shutters and lighting the silver lamps. The table was spread with silken cloth richly embroidered and edged with a golden fringe. On it were set three flat unleavened loaves, covered with a napkin; and also six little plates filled with symbolical food, an egg, a lettuce, a radish, a lamb's bone, and a mixture of oranges, cinnamon, and nuts. By the dishes glittered tall beakers embossed with sacred scenes and filled with red wine.

When all was ready, the guests came in, many of them poor neighbours, but with them also several wealthy merchants, whose wives were dressed in rich stuffs from Lombardy. They wore head and neck ornaments of pearls and precious stones, and costly rings sparkled on their fingers. The children's mother, however, as the hostess, was dressed in simple, fine, white linen, and wore no jewels.

Rabbi Eleazar, their uncle, took his place on a purple velvet cushion, on which lay a splendid volume of the Talmud, bound in gold and velvet, very ancient, and adorned with coloured pictures. There was Abraham, hammer in hand, breaking the stone idols of his forefathers; Moses slaying the Egyptians; Pharaoh on his

jewelled throne; the plagues of Egypt; and Jerusalem, the holy city, in the middle of which rose the temple blazing with gold under a golden sun.

Leaning forward, after the proper manner, Rabbi Eleazar intoned the Talmud to a melody centuries old, and the company sang the chorus. The stories were wonderful tales of miracles, and the children loved to hear them. At set times the company tasted the symbolical food on the dishes, ate pieces of unleavened bread, and drank red wine. At the second cup the Rabbi lifted a piece of the unleavened bread and read as follows:—

“Lo, the food of which our fathers in Egypt partook! He that hungers, let him eat. For the present we celebrate the feast here, but in the years to come we shall celebrate it in the land of Israel; now as bondsmen, hereafter as freemen.”

When the feast was over, the company fell to talking, and the Aleppo merchant related to them his journey, the wonders he had seen, and the manner in which the Passover was celebrated in his country. Then they began to sing and jest, to while away the time before the evening meal.

At last the lady of the house brought out a great silver basin adorned with patterns of gold. She went round, and every guest washed his hands, pouring water over each hand alternately.

At this moment a loud knocking shook the house. It was a company of soldiers who had forced their way into the street of the Jewish quarter, and who, overhearing the singing and laughter, were attempting to break in. While the women concealed the valuables, the Rabbi descended to the door attended by some of the younger men, who had armed themselves with swords and clubs. Opening a wicket in the massive oaken door, the Rabbi parleyed with the soldiers. At first these would not hear reason, but insisted on forcing an entrance. In the end, however, they were bought off with money, on condition that those within should give over their celebrations.

To make sure that the bargain was kept, the soldiers, borrowing benches from the neighbours, and stealing some

flagons of wine, sat down to carouse in the street, filling the silence with their noise. Every now and then they assaulted the doors with benches and weapons. It was dawn before they were dispersed by the watch. Only then the terrified people within drew breath, and the children, exhausted by fear and weeping, fell into a heavy sleep.

“And now, cousin,” said the Aleppo merchant, “what think you of my advice? I say again, quit this land, and indeed remain not in Europe, for such a storm is gathering therein against those of our faith that it will wipe out with a flood of fire those of us who remain.”

XI

LONDON—SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO

A VERY different city from the one we know so well! London in those days was only a small town compared with our great metropolis. If we could walk through those old streets we should not see much to remind us of the great busy thoroughfares, the huge buildings, and never-ending traffic of the twentieth century. Of course, at first sight the streets would appear very picturesque, and the people with their quaint attire would fascinate us immensely; but, after the novelty had worn off, we should become aware of certain sights and smells which would gradually make us wish to come back to our own generation.

The names of many places would be familiar. People would speak then as they do now of St. Paul's, and we should see a noble building which was begun in William I's reign and took two hundred years to complete. This great church was enclosed in by a wall in which were six gates. Paul's Chain and St. Paul's Alley retain the names of two of them. We should go for a walk in Cheapside and recognize some of the names—Broad Street, Ironmonger Lane, Milk Street, and the Poultry. Away to the east we should catch sight of the great fortress, the Tower of London; while to the west we should see the stately Abbey of Westminster, lying away from London beyond the fields and gardens. That beautiful river, so swift and so clean, is *really* the Thames, and those lovely wooded hills in the north are the hills of Hampstead and Highgate.

However, it is far more interesting to talk to some one in the street. There are a great many clergymen about,

ever so many more than are seen nowadays, and clergymen can sometimes be very interesting in their conversation. Here comes one who is not only a Londoner by birth, but is also a close friend of Thomas à Becket; in fact, he wrote an account of Becket's life after the murder in 1170. Let us ask him to tell us about the town. His name is William Fitz-Stephen. Remember, he is very proud of his city and may perhaps exaggerate somewhat.

"London," he says, "is one of the noble cities of the world, and it sends its wealth and trade farther abroad and lifts its head higher than other cities. It is a healthy place to live in; it is proud of its churches (there are in London and the suburbs thirteen large and one hundred and twenty-six smaller churches), and it possesses strong defences. Its citizens are honourable men, and the womenfolk are modest. Both men and women behave well, dress well, and speak well.

"Yonder in the east is the Palatine Castle, which is very great and strong. It has a deep foundation fixed with mortar tempered by the blood of animals. The two towers on the west are very strongly fortified, and the great high wall northwards round the city has seven double gates. London used to have a similar wall to the south, but the great fish-bearing Thames with its ebb and flow has loosened and thrown it down. To the west, also, is the royal palace with ramparts and bulwarks. That is two miles away.

"It is worth while noticing the gardens of the suburban houses. They are planted with trees, and very spacious. On the north side of the city there are pastures and pleasant meadow-lands, through which flow rich streams turning the wheels of the mills. Close by lies a great forest with woodland pastures, coverts of wild animals, stags, fallow deer, boars, and wild bulls. Pleasant springs of clear water flow rippling over bright stones. Among these are Holy Well, Clerken Well, and Saint Clement's, and there, on a summer's evening, numbers of scholars and youths go for fresh air and exercise.

"Our city is proud of its men. In King Stephen's time there were twenty thousand horsemen and sixty thousand

footmen ready to take the field. A city is honoured by her men.

“There are three famous schools here, taught by teachers who are notable in philosophy; but there are other schools as well. The boys learn logic, and are taught to speak well and accurately. Sometimes they make verses and argue about the principles of grammar, and the rules of the past and future tenses.

“But a city must not only be serious. It should be merry and sportful as well. London has holy plays and representations of miracles. Every year on Shrove Tuesday the schoolboys bring fighting-cocks to the masters, and all the forenoon they delight to see them fight in the school-room. After dinner they go to the fields and play at ball. Every Friday in Lent fresh companies of young men take the field on horseback, and the citizens’ sons practise feats of war. Then at Easter there are battles on the water. A shield is hung on a pole fixed in mid-stream, and a boat without oars is used, so that the stream carries it forward. In the bow a young man stands ready with his lance, and if he breaks his lance against the shield and does not fall, he has performed a worthy deed; if, however, he does not break his lance and falls into the water, the people on the bridges, wharves, and houses, shout with laughter. There are generally two other boats close at hand to rescue him.

“In the holidays the boys leap, dance, shoot, wrestle, and cast stones. The maidens play on the timbrel and dance till the moon rises. In winter there is bull and bear baiting; or, if the frost is sufficient, many young men play upon the ice. Some slide; others tie bones to their feet and under their heels and slide in that way; others make themselves seats of ice as large as millstones. One sits down, and the others, holding hands, draw him along. If one slips, they all fall over.

“Of course there is much business carried on in London. Sellers and contractors work in their several localities. Along the river bank one finds the vintners, who take the wine from the ships and store it in their cellars. At Smoothfield, every Friday, there is a splendid show of

noble horses for sale. At the same place are sold agricultural implements. There one can see splendid long-flanked pigs, cows with their udders full of milk, huge oxen, and woolly sheep. Every nation under heaven sends its goods here, and merchants delight to trade in this city.

"I have one very notable thing to tell you. There is in London on the river-bank a public cook-shop. There can be found every day eatables according to the season, dishes of meat, roasted, fried, and boiled; coarse meats for poorer people; delicate meats for the rich, game, fowls, and small birds. If any visitor comes suddenly to a citizen's house, tired and hungry from a journey, and anxious for a meal, he can be supplied with water and bread while some one runs off to the cook-shop and buys whatever is wanted. However great a crowd of soldiers or travellers may come into the city, they make their way there to the shop, and every man can refresh himself as he pleases.

"London is divided into wards and has sheriffs and magistrates. The streets are provided with sewers and water tunnels. There are law courts of various kinds, and I do not think there is a city with more commendable customs of church attendance, honour to God's ordinances, keeping of sacred festivals, almsgiving, confirming betrothals, contracting marriages, celebration of nuptials, preparing feasts, cheering the guests, and also in care for funerals and the interment of the dead. The only pests of London are the immoderate drinking of fools and the frequency of fires."

It was quite an interesting account, was it not? One feels quite sorry to bid farewell to William Fitz-Stephen. He evidently loves London very much. It is a pity that we have to lose sight of him in the crowd. By the way, in reference to what he said about fires, we must recollect that Henry Fitzailwin, the first Mayor of London, ordered that all houses should be of brick or stone, with party-walls of the same material, and to be roofed with slates or tiles. He hoped in this way to prevent the outbreak of those fires which used to alarm the citizens of London so much.

XII

A NORTHAMPTON MAN IN PALESTINE (THIRTEENTH CENTURY)

MY name is John Tompkins, and my father kept an inn, named "The Bird in the Hand," in the town of Northampton. All my boyhood was spent in freedom and exercise; leaping, running, archery, hurling the stone—I loved better than learning to fashion letters on a parchment. If I had to fight with another youth, even though he were bigger than myself, I did so with a merry heart, not for mere love of using my fists, but in order to execute justice, for I never fought any honourable person, but only those who had played some scurvy trick on me or mine. So that, when I had reached the age of seventeen, there was in the town no youth more skilled in exercise, more able with his hands, nor one better grown than myself. At least so my father said, and he must have known. I stood over six feet in my hose and was broad in proportion. Of course, since then, as you can see, I have grown somewhat taller and have filled out considerably. At that time there was not a spare ounce of flesh on my body. I slept of nights like a dormouse in the winter.

Somehow or other for several months before St. John Baptist's day, in the year of our Lord, 1267, I had been restless, and my mood had led me into several adventures, of which more another time. But on that day there befell me that which utterly changed the current of my thoughts and at last took me to foreign lands. For there came into our quiet town Octobonus, the Pope's Legate, Prince Edward (God bless him!), and several of the local

lords, who one and all lifted up their hands, and swore that the Sacred Land should be freed from the presence of the heathen, that pilgrims and other holy men might go and come to the birthplace of the Saviour without let or hindrance. Thus they swore, and I, John Tompkins, to the merriment of those around me, unthinkingly lifted up my good right arm and swore likewise. Among those who mocked was Henry Hartop, the miller's son, and for long my bitter foe. This I could ill brook, and, taking him by the nape of his neck, I cooled his hot head with water from the trough hard by.

Perhaps this caused some little disturbance, my masters ; but certain it is that, when his friends once again had him safe and soused in their midst, I heard a voice saying, "And why dost scorn the sacred oath?" Looking round, whom should I see but His Highness, Edward the Prince, gazing at me reproachfully. "Nay," quoth I, falling on my knees ; "I scorn not the oath ; but I placed him, whom ye behold dripping yonder, under the cooling water, since he jeered at me when with the noble and valiant men yonder I lifted up my hand and swore also." "Is that so?" asked Prince Edward. "Yea, your Highness," quoth I. "Dost wish to fight the Saracens?" "Certes, I do," quoth I. "Then thy wish shall be granted. Come to me when thou art ready, and, because of thy valour and strength, thou shalt be among my body-guard."

And thus it came to pass that, in the year of grace 1271, I, John Tompkins, son of Michael Tompkins of "The Bird in the Hand," together with Henry Hartop, once my foe, but since my bosom friend, stood side by side upon the deck of Prince Edward's ship, as, just after Easter, she hove in sight of Acre—nearly four years after I had sworn my oath.

The Prince chose out from his force a thousand of his best and most expert soldiers, and, after a month's rest for man and horse, we joined the main army, this being about seven thousand strong. Then we marched forward to Nazareth, which we took ere we returned to the coast. Once again we made an expedition, on this occasion to a place called "The Pilgrims' Castle," where we slew more



THE SCENE OUTSIDE "THE BIRD IN THE HAND"



than a thousand Saracens. That was a march out of forty miles. In this manner Prince Edward hardened his troops, and prepared them for battle; for these slight occasions gave opportunity for personal valour and the exercise of skill. At the Pilgrims' Castle it so chanced that, being thrust into the heart of the mêlée, Hartop and I fought side by side, striking and hacking, gaining and giving ground. I could hear the laboured breath of my fellows, and knew that, unless one urged them to fresh courage, we were in jeopardy. Therefore, since I was bigger made than most men and able to endure, I smote the weapon from one of my foes, and, snatching him in my hands used him as a battle-axe, forcing those before me back, and clearing a path for those behind me. A clear voice shouted, "St. George for merry England!" And, knowing my fellows were following, forward I went, forgetting wounds and pain in the fierceness of my heart. At length, casting my human weapon aside, I seized a great rock that lay upon the ground, and, raising it above my head, hurled it crashing amidst the paynims. At this sight dismay seized them at such an exhibition of strength; woeful and disheartened, they gave ground, and we pursued, each slaying his foe, time and time again, till the field was ours.

At last I felt weary and weak from the loss of blood—a mist came before my eyes, and I sank upon the ground. Then, again the clear voice I had heard before spoke, "For valour and honour, for courage in the moment of danger, I dub thee Knight." As by a miracle I opened my eyes wide, and my sight came clear and distinct. There, with his reeking sword touching my shoulder, stood the Prince! Thus I won my spurs. Would that I could have saved him from pain and woe; but it was not to be. War is a cruel thing, and abounds with treachery. I knew this well, and yet that happened which I would have given my life to prevent.

It happened that one hot day, as we rested after much fighting which had won us great renown, and the Prince, by reason of the great heat (for it was about eight days after Whitsuntide, upon a Tuesday) lay upon his bed

bareheaded, and in his jerkin, there came a messenger with letters from the enemy. 'Twas a man we knew well, for he had often acted as messenger backwards and forward, and we all stood aback as he knelt before our Prince, while the letters were in reading. Suddenly, as though he were taking other letters from his belt, the varlet whipped out a poisoned dagger to stab His Highness. I leapt forward, but, before I could do aught, His Highness, lifting up his arm to defend himself, was stricken below the elbow; at the same time, and before the creature could stab again, the Prince had struck him a blow with his foot which felled him, and then, wresting the knife from his grasp, he killed the knave before he could rise from the ground.

All was bustle and confusion. Some ran for the physicians; others stood aghast; the Captain of the Temple rushed in with a costly and precious drink against poison, saying, "Did I not tell your Grace before of the deceit and subtlety of this people? Notwithstanding let your Grace take a good heart; you shall not die of this wound, my life for yours." Yet for all that, and though the wound was dressed, some days after the flesh began to putrefy, and we were all sad and heavy. The Princess especially made such sad moans that the Prince lay grieving lest he should be taken by death from her side. Then one of the physicians begged Lord Edmund and Lord John Voisie to lead the lady away, and not let her see her lord and husband till such time as he commanded. When this was done, and she had been withdrawn, crying out and wringing her hands, the surgeons took their knives and cut out of the Prince's arm all the dead and poisoned flesh, saying, "We promise you within these fifteen days you shall show yourself abroad upon horseback, whole and well as ever you were."

Their word was fulfilled. Moreover, when the great Soldan heard the news, he sent messengers of high rank to our Prince, calling upon God to witness that he had not been party to such treachery. Our Prince entertained these men honourably, and caused them to return in peace and unharmed.

But the vigour of our leader was gone for the time, and, on the day of the Assumption of Our Lady, we all set sail for Sicily. We travelled by land to Rome where we visited the Pope, afterwards journeying steadily on through France to Paris.

At that great city came news to me of my father's illness, so, seeking leave from the Prince, I set off in haste for England, bearing with me spoils, and wealth, and honour. It seemed as though a lifetime had passed by since I had left England's merry shores. Then I was but a boy. Now I was coming home a man, scarred with war, bronzed with the Eastern sun, a knight by the Prince's own hand, and burned upon my brain hundreds of memories I could never forget. Yet, it was only a few years, my masters, since I, as a boy, had lifted my foolish hand to swear the oath at Northampton. Yes; my emblem has a double meaning. The lifted hand is mine; the bird is fortune—the feathered, soaring creature in the hand of every man.

XIII

A JOURNEY TO THE NORTH OF ENGLAND (FOURTEENTH CENTURY)

IN the winter of the year 1331 three travellers and their four servants set out from Oxford to visit Newcastle. They were the Warden and two Fellows of Merton College, and being just ordinary men they journeyed in what was an ordinary manner for those days. A great lord could have travelled in one of the heavy machines called carriages, huge, clumsy things built on solid beams resting plump on the axles and drawn by four horses harnessed in a row. Such a conveyance with its rounded covering, its tapestries, windows and silk curtains looked wonderfully picturesque, and was as gaudily painted as a modern gipsy caravan, but one shudders to think how the poor passengers were bumped black and blue as the cumbrous vehicle lumbered along the ill-kept roads. Our travellers went on horseback, so they avoided the creaking of the axles and the heavy jolting of that mediæval structure, and, moreover, made a speedier journey. Sometimes the bridges were so narrow that a carriage could not go on, and had to turn back again. Everybody in those bygone days could ride a horse, so there was nothing at all unusual in these seven men setting out thus, and, being so large a number, they were less liable to attacks from the many robbers who infested the roads and tracks. Still, even so, the journey was dangerous, for what with highways pitted with holes and treacherous with bogs, cumbered with great stones and overgrown with bushes and brambles, there was quite enough risk to make a man think twice before he under-

took a long journey. If we add to this the discomfort of snow and rain, frost and flood, delay caused by broken bridges and the uncomfortable nature of the inns, we can realize that only a strong sense of duty has led our travellers to take the road.

They journeyed to the north by way of the safest and most convenient road, and naturally enough they went armed. Even the students of the university were allowed to carry weapons as they made their way to and from the university town. It is more than likely that these seven travellers also carried passports to enable them to move freely from one county to another. They also took with them a good supply of money, for not only were there the expenses for food and lodging to be met, but there were tolls to pay at the bridges and elsewhere. Sometimes people had to pay excessive prices at the inns. King Edward III made a statute to keep "hostelers et herbergers" from the "great and outrageous cost of victuals" with which they charged the people who travelled across the realm. It is very likely that our travellers took a supply of food with them on pack-horses, for it was quite customary for people to bring their food to the inns. We know that they did put up at various places, and paid for their board and lodging. One Sunday on their journey they had to pay the enormous sum of 2s. 3½d. for the whole seven of them, and the horses cost 10d. of this sum! Add it up and see for yourselves whether the sum is correct.

Bread	.	.	.	.	.	.	4d.
Beer	.	.	.	.	.	.	2d.
Wine	.	.	.	.	.	.	1½d.
Meat	.	.	.	.	.	.	5½d.
Potage	.	.	.	.	.	.	½d.
Candles	.	.	.	.	.	.	½d.
Fuel ⁹	.	.	.	.	.	.	2d.
Beds	.	.	.	.	.	.	2d.
Fodder for horses	.	.	.	.	.	.	10d.
							27½d.

Wouldn't it be pleasant if we could live as cheaply as that? They even had a coal fire as they got further north. Sometimes their food consisted of eggs, or vege-

tables, for $\frac{1}{4}$ d; sometimes a chicken or a capon. Fat cost them $\frac{1}{2}$ d., gravy $\frac{1}{2}$ d., pickles $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; sugar was 4d. We must recollect that some things were much cheaper in those days than now. Only a few years after this, at the time of the Black Death, a man could buy a fat wether for 4d., a large pig for 5d., a lamb for 2d. In the fourteenth century the cost of living was probably less than a tenth of what it was before the recent Great War. Beef was three pounds a 1d., and beer $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a gallon. Still we must recollect that incomes were smaller in proportion.

But travellers in those days had disadvantages from which we are luckily free. There is a book which tells us of some of these. A servant is sent ahead by his master to engage a room, and he hopes that "there are no fleas nor bugs, nor other vermin." "No, sir, please God," says the innkeeper, "for I make bold that you shall be well and comfortably lodged here—save that there is a great peck of rats and mice." In another chapter, two travellers who have slept in the same room talk together. "William," says one, "undress and wash your legs, and then dry them with a cloth, and rub them well for love of the fleas, that they may not leap on your legs, for there is a peck of them lying in the dust under the rushes . . . Hi! the fleas bite me so and do me great harm, for I have scratched my shoulder till the blood flows."

Perhaps, now and again, our travellers put up at a country house, or at a monastery. In the former case they might dine with the lord on the dais, while their servants sat at the lower table. They would sleep in the solar which was built out on the first story from the dining-hall, and the servants would lie on mattresses among the rushes in the hall. Rooms were scarce then, and people were accustomed to sleeping more than one in a chamber. Probably, for the most part, they slept very soundly and were not disturbed by the snores of their bed-fellows. They went to bed directly after supper, and rose at daybreak.

Our travellers could easily tell which was an inn, not by the sort of sign-board we see now, but by the long pole with a bunch of branches lashed to the end. "Good wine

needs no bush," says an old proverb, in reference to this custom. One of Chaucer's pilgrims refers to this also :—

But first quod he here at this ale-stake
I wil bothe drynke and byten on a cake.

So these men made their journey slowly northwards. They saw strange sights—great monasteries and miserable tumbledown cottages, huge, splendidly-built churches and dirty little ale-houses, sometimes a magnificently structured stone bridge, sometimes "a poor bridge of timber with no causeway to come to it." They would pass hundreds of clerics of all descriptions, prelates perhaps, certainly pardoners, monks and friars, pilgrims; beggars of all kinds; minstrels; fools, labourers, and workmen. They would meet knights and squires and yeomen; ladies and their servants; lawyers, merchants, and seamen; royal messengers, sheriffs, bailiffs, and other officials. Probably as they passed through the towns they would catch sight of people atoning for their misdeeds in the stocks, or hanging from the wayside in chains upon the gallows. Jugglers amused them with their antics, balancing long poles on their chins, poising themselves on the points of swords, or tumbling quaintly head downward in their strange dances. The warden and his companions might occasionally have to stay longer than they wished at some inns, on account of bad weather. When they reached the Humber they had to pay eightpence—a large sum—for the river was wide and difficult, and the ferryman took the opportunity of making a high charge for their passage. The ordinary price was a penny a horseman.

You would like to hear of an adventure, and sometimes such things did happen. Near Lichfield, in 1342, some merchants complained to the Earl of Arundel that in Cannock Wood, while their servants were carrying spicery and mercery on two horses, Sir Robert de Rideware and two of his squires seized the little company and took them to the priory of Lappeley. Luckily one of the servants escaped; and thus the news of the robbery came out. Meanwhile the spicery and mercery had been shared round. The servant who escaped carried the news to the bailiff.

He collected his men, and there was a stubborn fight. Several of the robbers were slain; four of them were captured, and beheaded forthwith; the spices were recovered. Then Sir Robert, in his turn, fetched a relative and his men to his help; they pursued the bailiff; overcame him; and again took possession of the spices. The two merchants desired justice, but their enemies prevented them from entering Stafford, and so they returned to Lichfield, badgered and threatened all the time by the knight and his fellow robbers.

Our travellers had no spicery or mercery. They were college men, and made their journey safely; but, even so, they had quite as exciting a time as we could wish. Their journey took them a very long time, and was very expensive. Hundreds of years after the time of which we have been talking, to travel at ten miles an hour was considered a very rapid rate.

XIV

THE SHADOW OF DEATH (FOURTEENTH CENTURY)

IT is an old, old man that speaks to you, my children ; one to whom for many a long year since it has appeared a marvel in his own eyes that he lived, and moved, and had his being. For, in my twelfth year, there fell upon this dear land of ours such a scourge as we had never known before, nor so fully since. Suddenly like some foul, dark bird of prey its gloomy wings overshadowed us, hid from us the light of the sun, and passing away as noiselessly as it had come, left behind lonely hearts, desolate hearths, and a mark which marred our nation's life for centuries. Much that happened then I could not have explained at the time ; the full knowledge has come to me since from the lips of others—seafarers, holy men, merchants, and nobles. So that I can speak now of those bygone days as one who lived apart from men, saw more than those who actually passed through the dark valley, and, turning his head, beholds the evil that filled the land with a wail of anguish.

Yet I lived also, just a happy English boy, rejoicing in the love of father and mother, brothers and sisters. We dwelt in a cottage close by the town of Leicester, six of us in all, for I had one brother, and two fair little sisters, whom I loved with all my heart. As those days come back to me once more, afar off, across the mist of the years, I hear again the merry cries and peals of laughter that rippled round our cottage walls, and I catch faint glimpses of smiles that used to play across children's faces ; and at the memory my heart feels faint ; then

it revives and beats faster, for the years are hastening by, and anon I shall see all my long-lost ones again.

There had been hot weather, drought, dense fog, and even earthquake, in that summer of 1348. Yet the splendid harvests that had waved and nodded in the golden fields were being gathered in, and every one rejoiced in the happy August days. My father was a labourer, and my brother Jack and I had helped him daily in the fields. Sometimes my mother came out with us, and then Mary and Bess my sisters would bring their dolls and play about the ground where we had reaped and gleaned, and we would all take our meals together. Truly it was a happy time!

One day I saw my father looking serious, while a man who had come into the fields was talking with him. He spoke to my mother, and she also became very grave, and gathered her two little girls to her side. We went on working that day in an unwonted silence, and, as we walked home, my parents seemed to glance anxiously about them, as though looking for some visible sign in the air around.

But the sign was waiting for us in our dwelling-place. As we entered, my mother started back with a scream of horror, and rushing out of the cottage, dragged my young brother and sisters away. Then, as I stood on the path, I saw what had caused her alarm. Lying upon our cottage floor, with blood trickling from his mouth, was a poor wretch just about to die. His face and hands were blotched with black marks, and he was grievously swollen. My father stood gravely by, then took my arm, and led me away. That night some kindly neighbours sheltered us, for we dared not enter our home. Still, all our care was of no avail. Before two days had passed people were dying by tens and scores, and there was no escaping from the Black Death that swept over the whole land. Men said it was a scourge sent from God because of our sins, yet it fell upon the Scots advancing into England, so that 5000 of them perished almost at once. In our own town of Leicester, in the parish of St. Leonard, there died more than 380 souls; more than

400 in Holy Cross; in St. Margaret's, more than 700; and so in like numbers in other parishes. Soon the living were unable to bury the dead. It had been "merry England" before; but now the air was full of foul disease and the cries of mourners.

The evil fell so suddenly. One morning a man would be hale; the next day he would be lying a corpse. In two days, or perhaps three, all was over. It was vain to endeavour to escape; for there was no place free from death. I have heard since that the Plague came from the East, through Constantinople, Italy, and France, whence it spread all over Europe. I say there was no escape anywhere. The monasteries, generally so healthy, were smitten like other places. Over and over again I have met men who have told me the same tale. Still the remark of one monk lingers in my memory. He came from the Cistercian Abbey of Meaux in Yorkshire, and he said, "In our Abbey alone during that August the Abbot himself, twenty-two monks and six lay brothers swelled with the boils and died." At Croxton, near us, all died save the Abbot and Prior. At another place only ten monks out of fifty remained alive. In our town of Leicester I have seen with my own eyes as many as sixty corpses brought at one time for burial in the same great pit. They say that in London, at a place called Smithfield, there were buried daily more than 200 bodies besides those who were laid elsewhere.

Yet why should I pass by my own loss like this? In less than a week after our sad home-coming from the fields, little Bess fell sick. Father and mother watched by her side; and, as they watched, we sat outside waiting, and there was no hope in our hearts. In three days we buried her; and, as we returned from the funeral, poor Mary complained she did not feel well. She went next; then Jack. Father and mother tried to comfort me; but they themselves needed help, and none could give it them. Before a month had gone by, I was left alone—all alone in our cottage. Oh, the agony of it all! The terrible silence and desolation ate into my very heart. Can you wonder that since then I have never felt the old joy

at my heart? * My boyhood ended with that cry of my mother's as she saw the stranger dying, and I buried my last interest in life the day I laid my father to rest in the churchyard of Holy Cross. Is it not strange how some are taken and others left? Why should I be spared out of our family? I often wished it had been otherwise.

That wish was most frequent during and after the Plague. I saw mothers desert their stricken children; I saw the sick left to die and rot on the public highways. Who can tell how many of our English folk passed hence in those days? Some would have us believe that half the people of this fair realm died in the year 1348 to 1349. It seems almost impossible to believe that, yet, with my eyes, I saw sheep and oxen wandering masterless and unattended through the crops, beheld them lie down and die in ditches and under hedges. Nor was that harvest ever taken in fully, for, in the late autumn, the splendid corn lay rotting on the ground, and none heeded or cared for anything, but went about with wild unseeing eyes. Cities, boroughs, towns and hamlets throughout the whole land decayed, and have ever since been decaying, while several were left without a single inhabitant. Nor could men do aught to check the scourge. It went on till it stopped of its own accord. I remember well the attempts of the Flagellants to appease the Almighty. For thirty-three days, a day for each year of the Saviour's life, they stripped to the waist, and scourged themselves till the blood lay in pools at their feet. Then, robed in sack-cloth, they trod with slow steps through the streets of Leicester, chanting their hymns of remorse and penitence, flinging themselves from time to time with arms outstretched, like the arms of a cross, and, as they lay thus, came their "Master," who lashed their torn backs anew as they rested, stretched out upon the ground. It was all in vain, so far as the Foul Death was concerned. That raged incessantly, and many of them in their turn fell beneath its attack. I care not to say what I think about such a spectacle. My heart was woeful enough without the sight of self-inflicted, added woe.

Methinks you know all that happened after the Plague,

and I need not weary you much longer with my mournful story. The very next year the fewness of labourers led Parliament to pass the Statute of Labourers, and, if men tried to leave their neighbourhood to seek higher wages, they were branded with hot irons. Prices rose all round. At first things were so cheap that a man could, just after the Plague, buy a horse for 6s. 8d., a fat ox for 4s., a cow for 12d., a pig for 5d., and masters were willing to pay high wages because of the scarcity of labour. Very soon, however, the landowners waited upon the King, and men were forced to toil for the old wage which they had received before the Plague. England has never, since that day until now, been merry England again. That was why John Ball and his fellows went about preaching from the text :—

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?

In my middle age I saw the march of the men of Essex and Kent upon London. I was at Smithfield, when Wat Tyler fell dead beneath Walworth's dagger. I heard Richard say, "What, my friends! would you shoot your King? Do not grieve for the death of that traitor. Follow me; I will be your leader, and you shall have whatever you please to ask." Ah! yes, I recollect all. True some of the old mirth has come back to the nation's heart since then; and true it is that the labourer nowadays is better off. Food is more abundant; wages are higher. My life has been long, my friends, but yet I remember all. And can you wonder that at times I seem to myself but a long-drawn-out dream, and yearn for the time when these old eyes will see once again the forms I loved so long ago in that golden summertime of my boyhood?

XV

HOW SIR HENRY PERCY SOUGHT HIS PENNON (FOURTEENTH CENTURY)

MORE than five hundred years ago, in the days when Richard II was King and misrule prevailed everywhere in England, there were stirring times in the north. The whole realm was in disorder, and "wasters that would not work but wander about, that would eat no bread but the finest wheat, nor drink but of the best and brownest ale," multiplied on every side. The strain of war had weakened the land; the peasants had risen in revolt under Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, and had been crushed through the treachery of King and Government; the Merciless Parliament held sway, and the year 1388 was truly a sad year for merry England.

In those days men lifted up their hands as they pleased, and especially was that so in the lands where England and Scotland met. There had long been strife between these warlike countries. Ever since the days of Edward I, when Alexander III did homage for his fief, on through the days of Balliol, Wallace, and the Bruce, battles were fought, desperate battles that were the training ground for the English soldiers who gained therein the skill that brought us glory in the great Hundred Years' War between this land and France. At one time the Scots, and at another the English, would be victorious, while many valiant deeds were done. Bannockburn, Halidon Hill, Neville's Cross, and Otterburne are the well-known names of some of those hard-fought fields. It is of the last of these conflicts, Otterburne, that our story tells us. We must picture ourselves in the north of England, near Newcastle-

upon-Tyne, in the days when Earl James Douglas and Sir Henry Percy with their knights and squires skirmished over the countryside for the honour of their countries, and for their own personal glory.

Now the Earls Douglas, Moray, and March left the main body of the Scots, thinking to enter the country about Durham, and then, on their return, to burn and pillage the countryside, assaulting any castle, tower, or house that lay on their track. They came thus to the land of the Earl of Northumberland, and with none to hinder them, crossed the river Tyne near Brancepeth, about nine miles above Newcastle, and so entered the bishopric of Durham, where there was a good country. Wherefore they set themselves to slay, and burn, and work displeasure.

As soon as the English lords and knights saw the fires and smoke abroad in the land, they began to band themselves together to repel this hardy foe. The Earl of Northumberland sent his two sons, Sir Henry and Sir Ralph, to Newcastle, commanding them to draw every available man to that town, while he himself guarded the passage over the river at Alnwick, lest the Scots should strive to pass that way. But the Scots rode on unhindered, burning and pillaging, till the smoke of their offence reached even to the walls of Newcastle. With their nimble steeds and light equipment they moved speedily, and before an English force could reach them, had passed on to do damage elsewhere. In the country between Newcastle and Durham, for twelve good English miles, there was no town but was burnt by them. Then, crossing over the Tyne, they came and assembled together before Newcastle, flaunting their banners under the very eyes of the English knights gathered together in that walled city.

Thus these three Scottish Earls defied the English for two days, since as yet the Southerners were not in sufficient force to do battle. However, there came out of the town, to uphold the valour of their race, many young Englishmen, who offered the Scots single combat. Among these the two sons of the Earl of Northumberland appeared daily at the barriers, and were foremost in the

scrimmages. And thus it came to pass that Sir Henry Percy and the Earl Douglas fought hand to hand one day, while the two hosts gazed in wonder at the lusty strokes, and viewed the valiant bearing of these two warriors.

Sir Henry had ridden down to the barrier, and, raising himself in his stirrups, had shouted out his challenge so that all could hear, "Come forth, Earl Douglas, if ye dare, and strike a blow for the honour of your land!" Scarcely had the words died away, than the Earl, mounted on a small but sturdy Scottish horse, rode out from his camp, crying, "A Douglas! A Douglas!" There and then, lowering their lances, they flung themselves into battle. With a mighty crash the lances splintered on the rock-like shields, yet neither horseman was overthrown. So violent was the onset that for a time each warrior sat and gazed in amazement at his foe. Then seizing, and raising their battle-axes, they joined afresh, and in skilful manœuvres each strove to gain advantage over the other. So evenly were they matched that English and Scotch alike came forth from their strongholds to view the conflict nearer at hand. Wheeling round his horse suddenly, so that it stood upon its hind legs, all at once Sir Henry Percy raised his weapon and, whirling it in the air as though it were but a reed, brought it down with mighty force, thinking to slay the Douglas. Yet he, keen of eye and quick of hand, swerved just in time, so that the blow missed its aim, and Percy was at his opponent's mercy. Instantly, Douglas clove through the handle of his enemy's weapon as though it were stubble; then, in a second, leaping to the ground, he seized Sir Henry's lance head with its tiny fluttering pennon and, ere one could see his motive, he sat again firmly upon his little Scottish nag, which, so bravely and so well, had served his noble master.

Then said Earl Douglas to Sir Henry Percy, "Sir, I shall bear this token of your prowess into Scotland, and shall set it on high on my castle of Dalkeith, that it may be seen far off."

"Sir," quoth Sir Henry, "ye may be sure ye shall not



"I WILL FIX YOUR PENNON BEFORE MY TENT"



pass the bounds of this country till ye be met withal in such wise that ye shall make none avaunt thereof."

"Well, sir," quoth the Earl, "come this night to my lodging and seek for your pennon. I shall set it before my lodging, and see if ye will come to take it away."

Then, turning hastily, he rode off, shaking aloft in derision the fluttering pennon, and so left the valiant English noble bitterly angry at his discomfiture. For, with broken lance and cloven battle-axe, he could do nothing but turn and ride back helplessly to his sheltered town, knowing that to seek the pennon by night would be to go to certain capture or death; for the Scots, he knew full well, would keep heedful watch and ward for his coming.

On the next day the Scots broke up their camp and turned towards Scotland, now resting, now burning and plundering, till they came before the town and castle of Otterburne, which they resolved to assail. This castle was strong, and stood in marish ground, so that the Scottish lords, as a body, were anxious not to remain; but the Douglas was desirous of meeting once again his valiant enemy, and, therefore, he would not stir. He said, "Let us assail the castle; it is pregnable; and we shall have double honour. And then let us see if Sir Henry Percy will come and fetch his pennon: it shall be well defended." So the Scots stayed, making for themselves "lodgings of boughs and great herbs," and fortified their camp as strongly as they could in the marish ground.

Meanwhile the English knights were rallying to their standards, and, when a sufficient force was assembled, they departed for Newcastle,—six hundred horse and eight thousand foot, all brave men ready to do battle. Yet, had they been wiser, they would have awaited the coming of the Bishop of Durham, who had gathered a mighty host. But Sir Henry Percy was hot for his pennon and would not wait. They left Newcastle after dinner, and came hot-foot to Otterburne, while the bright August moon was turning darkness into day, so that the men could see to join battle and fight during that lovely summer's night.

With loud cries of "Percy!" and "Douglas!" the English and Scots crashed together, and strove under that calm, pale moon, riding in the clearest of skies, and, because the fighting was sternest in one part, Sir Henry and the Earl Douglas both came thither, and their banners met. The battle was sore; for "when the English and Scots met in those old days there was hard fighting without sparing; there was no 'hold!' between them as long as weapons held good, and often, when men had fought thus, they parted from one another, saying courteously, 'God thank you,' as though each had done the other some great service by offering combat." Yet, in this fight, the English were of great strength and of bitter heart, because of all the damage the Scots had so wantonly done. Earl Douglas fought as bravely as ever, although the odds were against him. He went ever and ever forward, but, at last, met by three spears at once, he was wounded in the shoulder, breast, and thigh, and fell to earth. His knights and squires gathered around him, and so it chanced that, in the *mêlée*, the brave Earl was smitten again in head and thigh, and so the English passed over his body, nor knew till after the battle that they had slain the great Scottish lord.

Many a valiant hand-to-hand fight took place, yet because the English had marched rashly into battle, tired with their journey, the Scots, slowly, step by step, forced them back in the fierce and cruel battle. Many prisoners were made; among others Sir Henry Percy was taken by the Lord Montgomery, while Sir Ralph Percy was captured by Sir John Maxwell, who delivered him to the Earl of Moray. 'Twas then that Maxwell won his spurs.

At last the English broke and fled, and, in a rout, men came flying from slaughter, under that peaceful summer's moon, and, although there lay at Newcastle a great force of ten thousand Englishmen, fresh and ready for conflict, the rashness of Sir Henry had brought the Southerners defeat, and now the Scots had withdrawn their men, taking with them a thousand and forty prisoners, and leaving of English slain upon the field one thousand eight hundred and forty.

Thus the Scots came from battle with Earl James Douglas the dead and Sir Henry Percy the living. They rode to the fair Abbey of Melrose (the abode of the black monks), which lies on the very border of the two countries. There they rested, and buried the Douglas. This they did reverently upon the second day, laying over his body a tomb of stone, with his banner hanging above.

Afterwards they disbanded, and went each with his prisoner, or otherwise, to his own lands. The Englishmen found the Scots right courteous and gentle in their deliverance and manner, so that they were well content.

XVI

HOW MARIAN SAW THE PAGEANTS (FOURTEENTH CENTURY)

THERE was not a girl in York earlier out of bed that Corpus Christi Day. When your father has promised to take you to see the plays from early morning till dewy eve you feel very excited. The evening before, Marian had seen the King's herald ride in all his splendour through the street, and had heard him crying, "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! We command on the King's behalf, and the Mayor and Sheriffs of this city, that no man go armed in this city with swords nor with axes nor none other defences in disturbance of the King's peace and the play, or hindering of the procession of Corpus Christi Day." She had listened as though her very life depended on her attention, as he went on to command men to bring forth the pageants, that the men of crafts and all other men that find torches should come forth in array, and that players should be ready between four and five of the clock in the morning under the penalty of a fine of 6s. 8d. Ah! she had listened closely with both her ears, for was not Robin the Glover to be Herod, who was going to rage in pageant and street; and little Hal, his son, to act as the son of Pilate, and get 4d. for his acting? Yes, Will Hatch and John Dale, her father's men, were to be Annas and Caiaphas, and earn 2s. 2d. and 3s. 4d. respectively. Marian had heard her father say that all the guilds would be represented in the procession, and march past the King's Majesty and all the lords and ladies.

So Marian rose very early with the sun, and donned

her gown of blue sendal, and put on her pretty little feet her broad shoon of yellow silk. She gathered her soft golden hair into its silver network, and was soon gazing at her white arms with the long sleeves drooping down, and thinking how very white they were, till her little heart danced with pleasure under her laced bodice. Marian was quite as vain as other girls of her age. She loved to show herself in her fine array—besides, her father was proud of her, and she wished him to see her at her best, to be sure.

When she was *quite* ready she called her father, and soon he came down yawning and rubbing his eyes. "Heigho!" he cried. "Here's a nice to-do all about a Corpus Christi Day. Well, Brighteyes, where's breakfast? Man and girl must eat, even though they be on pleasure bent!" So they sat and ate a good meal, for they were before the time, and the trumpets had not yet given the sign of the assembly.

Tarara! Tarara! Tarara! "There they go!" cried Marian, and not allowing her father to eat another morsel she dragged him out into the street. How fresh and sweet was the morning air! The sky was as blue as a sky can be, with never a cloud to hide the rising sun. All along the streets people were hurrying in and out of the old stuccoed houses with their broad, oak beams. Every one seemed in a jolly mood, for people laughed, chatted, and poked fun at one another as they made for the place where the pageants were drawn up. "There they are, father!" cried Marian, as they came in sight of a number of stages. "So I see, my lass," he answered, and they both stopped to watch the movement all around them.

The pageants were little stages on wheels—just scaffolding with boards for the stage. The underpart of the stage was hidden by an embroidered tapestry that ran all the way round. It was here that the players retired when they were not acting. Over the stage was a canopy, or roof, standing on four wooden posts, and decorated with carving. Four flags waved at the corners, and in the centre, where the roof rose to a point, was fixed a

thin pole bearing aloft a bigger and longer flag. There were many of these pageants drawn up in line, each with its own players, all ready to start. Each guild had its own set of players—the Goldsmiths, the Carpenters, the Smiths, the Vintners, the Haberdashers—there they were, on this glorious Thursday after Trinity Sunday, ready for a long, long day's acting.

Again the trumpets gave a flourish, and behold the pageants began to roll along to Marian's vast delight. She could see the six wheels going round and round, and hear them rattling on the cobbled street. But her father took her by the arm, and said, "Come along, my little maid; let's away to the first station and witness the play." So they ran with other people up one street, and down another, to get a good place for the scenes. They arrived at a spot where there was open ground, and they were only just in time, for the authorities had much ado to keep the people from crowding too closely on to the place where the pageant was to stand. Soon there was heard, over the chatter of the folk, a rumbling noise. "Here they come! Here they come!" And there was the pageant close at hand, and Marian just hugged herself with excitement. She was actually going to see her first play!

It was the scene between Master and Mistress Noah; and at last Marian became quite angry with the lady. Her husband told her, again and again, the flood was coming. She just took no notice at all, but went on spinning as calmly as a woman can. Even when the water lapped round her feet she went on spinning. Then she thought she might go down to the town to do some shopping, and she wished to go and have a gossip with some of her friends. No! she has no wish at all to go in that great ugly ship, and leave the land. Even the people in the crowd began to call aloud, "You'll be drowned if you do not go in!" Marian called with the others, "Go in, Silly!" Then the little ducks came quack, quacking from the hole in the stage. How Marian loved them with their little beady eyes and coloured bills; but she was so anxious about obstinate

Mistress Noah that she could hardly notice the birds. At length the patient Noah grew angry. "Wife!" he shouted, "will you go in or not?" "That will I not, Noah!" quoth she. Then Noah, waxing wrath, gave her a sound thrashing, and while Marian was sorry for her, she admitted to her father that really Mistress Noah deserved it. But even then Mistress Noah was not sorry, she hit out right and left, and so valiantly that soon poor old Noah was sprawling on the ground, and crying, "Wife, enough; my back is almost broken." "Yea," quoth she, "and I am beaten black and blue." Then Noah's sons came and reconciled their parents. Every one went into the ark, and the door was shut upon a safe and happy family.

"Wasn't it rare?" said Marian, as the pageant rolled off. "Certes," said her father, "'twas choicely done. Wouldst see another?" "Why, father, am I not to see them all?" "All, quotha!" said he, "an' ye will—I'm but a mere man!" Then he laughed, and the people around laughed also.

The pageants rolled by. Marian saw in one an actor sitting aloft on a throne. He wore a white sheepskin coat, and had a tiara on his head. His face was gilded so that it shone again. People whispered it was God Almighty impersonated by Wat the Cordwainer. On one pageant there were ladders, and Marian saw the angels ascending to, and coming down from heaven. There was a great thing that opened and shut like a dragon's mouth, and breathed out smoke very horribly. Her father, when she asked what it was, said, in an awe-struck tone, "'Tis the mouth of hell!" Again she heard barrels rolled over the stage to represent the rumbling of the earthquakes upon the Judgment Day, and she felt it was all very terrible to see; but she didn't tell her father so, lest he might take her home.

"Let us away to see the King and Queen," said a friend of theirs who had joined them. "We can pick up the plays again elsewhere." So they went through the streets which were now becoming very hot in the sunshine. They had been standing at the entrance of the

Priory of Holy Trinity in the Mikelgate, and, after seeing Richard and his Court, they had a meal, and then moved on to the Pavement in the middle of the town, where the twelfth and last station was situated. And here Marian laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks.

They had seen many and many scenes from Holy Writ ; but at last there came a pageant which was cheered loudly, for its players were to act scenes from a play called *The Shepherds*. Marian had heard her father speak of this, and she glanced up at him, as much as to say, "Now we're going to have some fun !" He nodded ; and the actors started.

The shepherds were all sitting on the ground, and the cattle were grazing around them. Two of them had a terrible quarrel about the colour of the Emperor's beard ; but a third shepherd managed to quiet them. Then they all had a jolly meal, to which each one contributed his share, and they ate heartily. The beer jug was passed round again and again. When they had finished, they collected the pieces left in order to give them to the poor, and then fell asleep. They were awakened by angels, who sang to them. The shepherds tried to sing the angels' song, but they did not make much of a success of it. They seemed to be very dull shepherds.

Now, while the shepherds had been eating their meal, there had come a certain man named Mak, who ate with them, and then, while they were sleeping, after looking carefully around, he jumped up, and ran off quickly with a fine fat ram. This he gave to his wife as a present. When the shepherds awoke they missed the ram, and became suspicious of Mak. So they made for his home. He met them at the door with his finger to his mouth. "Hush !" he said, "or else you will wake my wife and her babe." But the shepherds were not going to be put off. They searched all the outhouses, and at last insisted on going indoors. Mistress Mak sat up, and talked very plainly to them. Still they went on searching, taking no notice of her. At last one of them saw the cradle. He asked to see the baby. "No !" cried Mak. "He's asleep. If

you wake it, it will cry. Why do you not go away and leave us alone?" Then the shepherd bent to kiss the child. "Goodness me!" he exclaimed, "what a long nose it has! Why, it's a snout!" The others came crowding round, and when they lifted the babe from the cradle, lo and behold, it was the missing ram!

How the people laughed and cheered. Marian cried, "Do it again!" But the poor actors were getting tired by this time, and one of them said, "Wait till Christmas, my masters; and we will show you the sheep-stealing Mak once more."

The long summer's day was nearing an end as Marian and her father walked home. She was singing:—

"Lulla, lulla, thou little tiny child,
By, by, lully, lullay, thou little tiny child,
By, by, lully, lullay.
O Sisters two, how may we do
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling, for whom we sing
By, by, lully, lullay?"

"Hasn't it been splendid, father?" she asked as she went up to bed. "Yes, child," he answered. "What did you like the best?" she said. "The Maid Marian," he said, laughing as he kissed her good-night.

XVII

A PILGRIMAGE TO CANTERBURY (FOURTEENTH CENTURY)

ONE often hears boys and girls in their games say, "Let's pretend." After that remark they can become almost anything, an engine-driver, an airman reconnoitring the enemies' lines, or the mother of a considerable family. "Let's pretend" is the "open sesame" to the realms of gold. In this story we all wish to go on a pilgrimage, so "Let's pretend."

It is a long, long time ago, nearly five and a half centuries back in old England, and, as we walk slowly over London Bridge, that curious old bridge you have heard about with houses here and there on either side of the road, you notice the three open spaces, especially the one called "The Square" near the city side. This very year (1390) there was a grand pageant of chivalry on this bridge, and two doughty champions representing England and Scotland fought before King Richard. Sir David Lindsay, the Scot, was the victor. Now we cross the drawbridge on the Southwark side, and here we are at length in the Borough, in the county of Surrey. There are many fair inns hereabouts, you can see their signs as we pass, the Spur, Christopher, Bull, and others; but we go on till we reach one called the Tabard. There is its sign—a sleeveless coat, open at the sides, with a square collar winged at the shoulders, the garment of a herald—and here we turn into the courtyard. Notice the wooden gallery all round where the people are standing to watch our coming in; look also at our fellow-pilgrims gathering in the yard. All these folks are going to

accompany us to Canterbury; so we shall be a numerous party, and there will be little fear of attack from robbers and other knaves. It is said that Harry Bailey, the keeper of this inn, intends to come with us. We shall hire horses in Southwark, and get relays at Rochester. Our route is the high road to the Continent, and so there is a regular service of hired horses all along it. We must pay twelpence for the hire from Southwark to Rochester; from there to Canterbury will cost another twelpence. See, the horses are marked specially with hot irons, so that they may not be stolen by dishonest people.

What is a pilgrimage? Why, wherever have you come from that you ask such a question? It is a journey that men or women undertake for the benefit of their souls. Pilgrims are sick people, not in body perhaps, but in mind or soul. They suffer from diseases that doctors cannot heal. Perhaps a man has committed a crime, or thought some grievous thing, or lived a selfish life; it is useless for him to swallow the doctor's medicines; these cannot bring him comfort or ease. He goes to the priest, who commands him to make a pilgrimage as a penance; sometimes he has to go barefoot, or in his shirt, a very long way. We have shrines in England, whither pilgrims may go for comfort. One is at Walsingham, another at Glastonbury. Durham, Westminster, St. Albans, St. Edmund's Bury, Waltham, Lincoln, York, Peterborough, Winchester, Holywell, Beverley also have special attractions for pilgrims, shrines where folk may worship and pray, holy relics, wonders, tombs. At Canterbury, as you know, the holy, blissful martyr St. Thomas à Becket is buried, and we are all going to kiss the stone tomb above his body. Perchance some grace may come to us. The very journey we are making shows we are in earnest.

Are all pilgrims in earnest? Alas and alack! I wish I could answer "yes." As you pass along the road you will see many a pilgrim; but many are not devout. Some go like gipsies to get money at a fair; some are merely make-believes, false hermits—just sturdy knaves who

want to live easily and have a lazy time along the road in the fine weather. They eat, and drink, and live shameful lives under the protection of the holy habit that they wear. Not only is this so in England. All over Europe you may find such rogues who disgrace their habit and their pilgrim's staff. It is difficult to tell who are genuine. It is best to be on one's guard. Do not give money readily to any pilgrim who begs. Directly you see a person in a pilgrim's attire, with his staff pointed with iron, a bag slung at his side for food, and with a large flat hat, then be especially distrustful. You may be in the presence of a holy man, it is true; but the chances are that there stands before you a cunning beggar, who will take the alms you give him and squander it on food or drink. Especially distrust the Palmer and the Pardoner, professional pilgrims. They wear emblems as though they had journeyed far to holy places; they tell you tales to lead you astray; they offer to sell you relics that can work miracles. Be on your guard against them!

All pilgrims are not in earnest. But many of them are. Do not think they are all ecclesiastics, that is to say, men who are officers in the Church. Look at our companions gathering together. They are men and women of all sorts and conditions, rich and poor, high and low degree. As we journey with them, perhaps they will tell us of the reasons for their pilgrimage. Some may have been delivered from a great evil, and desire to thank God in some especial way for their deliverance. Others may be going to Canterbury to ask God to give them some particular blessing in the future. Some may just be undertaking the journey for change and occupation. The world is a strange place, my child, and men and women have many different thoughts; yet all alike, whatever their lot in life may be, have one great need. We are all human beings and at times feel our weakness. Then we turn to what is higher and greater than we are ourselves, and implore Divine aid. All these pilgrims you see here are seeking in their own way for relief which God alone, in His own way, can give. This also I ask you to remember. The bond of fellowship that binds us together

is religion ; in that common tie, for the moment, we are all comrades. Nobles, poor men, religious men, soldier, sailor, and civilian, man and woman—we shall journey as faithful friends and companions for the time being, equal in God's sight and our own, along the high road to the holy place (just as we do in life itself), and there we shall kneel in true devotion. There in the great cathedral of Canterbury, while the light steals in through the great coloured windows, and all is quiet and peaceful, we shall pray, kneeling humbly before God. It may be that to some of us will come the message that we seek.

How long will it take us to go and return ? I am not quite certain ; but this is our plan. To-day we shall journey fifteen miles, and in all likelihood lie at Dartford for the night. There are hostelries kept specially for pilgrims ; guilds also keep open house for us, and thus share in our holy work. But roads are bad, and times uncertain. I cannot say positively just how far we may get each day. We hope to reach Rochester, thirty miles on our pilgrimage, by the end of the second day. We expect to halt at Sittingbourne for dinner on the third day, and perhaps spend the night at Ospringe, forty-six miles from London. The following day we shall pass sometime in the morning up Blean Hill, and through a lovely wood, whence the tower of the cathedral will be visible, and if all goes well we shall reach Canterbury, fifty-six miles from London, at the end of the fourth day. It will take us another four days to return. How long we shall stop at the shrine, I know not. The company will decide, and each pilgrim will fall in with the general wish. Perhaps in fourteen days we shall be back here in Southwark at the Tabard Inn.

We shall see strange sights on the way. We shall pass labourers, pedlars, singers, messengers, pilgrims, going and coming, soldiers, buffoons, tinkers, and nobles—every one and any one. One knows not what to expect, our adventures are as uncertain as our English weather. Still, I shall never see again such an amazing sight as I saw last time I went to Canterbury. Outside an inn at Sittingbourne was a blind beggar. He was sitting on a

bench with a bowl of drink on his lap, enjoying the warmth without and the pleasant warmth within. As I stood and watched him, I saw a boy come, tip-toe, quiet as the frost in winter, till he stood at the beggar's side. Then, all noiselessly, he put a long reed into the bowl, and, without the beggar knowing what was happening, the rascal sucked and sucked till he had drained the liquor all out of the bowl. I waited to see the beggar's astonishment when he found the bowl empty. No; I forget exactly what he said. Anyway, I had his bowl filled up again, and I found the boy, and reproved him for taking advantage of a poor man's affliction.

XVIII

HENRY V RETURNS FROM AGINCOURT (1415)

ON Saturday, 3rd November 1415, a crowd stood thick about the southern approach of London Bridge, and, in the memory of man, never had London poured out such a joyous multitude. Not an English man or woman but remembered the feverish months of anxiety, the chilling rumours of defeat and of massacre that had preceded the sudden news of victory ; a victory so wonderful that it had exalted the young King to be a national idol, and during the succeeding century made of him a legendary, heroic figure.

Harry the fifth ; that made all France to shake !

It was a motley, noisy multitude, composed of craftsmen, prentices, serving-girls, and country people, mingled with not a few outlandish seamen, rough fellows from the foreign ships, whose masts, coloured sails, and pennants littered the grey sheet of the Pool. Above them, patched with gorgeous standards, rose the towers of the massive gate that guarded the Bridge.

Hard by the entrance, behind the men-at-arms that kept a space clear before it, stood Master John Baldwin, girdler's apprentice, a tall lad of fourteen.

Although he had been waiting since daybreak, the hours had passed nimbly, the crowd amused him, and the sellers of hot pies and wastel cakes had supplied him with food.

Under the archway glittered the steel sallets and breast-plates of the guard ; before it stood motionless two immense and notable figures, a giant and giantess, huge creatures,

made more gigantic by high heels, false heads and shoulders of painted leather, whose highly-coloured masks were moulded into uncouth and lumpish features. The giant, bearded to the eyes with tow, grasped a great broad-axe in his right hand; at his belt clashed the keys of the city. The giantess, fantastically gowned, held a bunch of choice flowers. The eyes of the crowd were fixed alternately on these figures, and on the worn road that led to the green heights of Greenwich and Blackheath.

Presently, borne on the light breeze, came the sound of music, and a long stream of footmen, archers, and horse, many of them weather-beaten veterans from France, went by to a steady roar of cheers. Troops of mounted nobles, priests, friars, and clerks followed in splendid robes, armour, or monkish brown and black and white.

Then came a break in the procession, and, riding alone before a squadron of gorgeous horsemen, high above the bared heads of the crowd, behold the King himself!

Baldwin, peering between the steel caps of the guards, felt his heart grow great, as he looked on that tall, armed figure, with its imperious eyes of grey, set in a hawk-like face tanned to gipsy darkness by the southern sun, and framed by jet-black hair.

A King! A King indeed! Trumpets rang, the guard presented arms, the giant lowered his axe, his companion offered flowers to the conqueror, and the procession rode on through the arch.

Behind the King, strongly guarded, came a troop of French prisoners, some afoot, others mounted, some haughty, many dejected. Among them rode a noble figure, who surveyed the crowd with a smile half mocking, half detached, and the word went round that this was no other than Charles, Duke of Orleans, the famous poet and singer.

Many years after, in his old age, Baldwin remembered that gracious figure riding with such strange eyes to a captivity of twenty years in a foreign land.

But the lad did not wait longer by the gate. He hastened down to Bankside, then almost an open place dotted with fishermen's hovels, to a wooden landing-place.

Here his friend Will Draycott, the waterman, was waiting for him with a boat.

They pushed off, and Will rowed hard up-stream, fighting with the fierce current which roared and foamed, falling in a cataract through the arches of London Bridge. Baldwin at the tiller kept the boat's head hard to port, crossing himself the while, for the passage was not without danger. In this way they drew slowly across the river.

On the further bank, within its massive walls, lay London, its towers and steeples huddled about the huge cliff-like pinnacles and tower of Paul's, every building printed sharply in the clear air, hardly sullied by the faint smoke of wood fires. On their right lay London Bridge, with its great gateways, its line of narrow arches here and there supporting wooden houses; and in the middle Becket's beautiful chapel. Beyond gleamed the pale mass of the Tower.

Leaping ashore, the boy ran through narrow alleys, past the Steelyard, to the northern end of the Bridge, in time to see a group of choristers, clothed in white and winged to represent Cherubim and Seraphim, welcome King Henry with an English hymn.

"A goodly show," said a bystander to Baldwin, "but a poor thing by comparison with that at Cornhill Conduit, whither I purpose to go, as, if you are wise, you also will hasten."

The streets adjoining the Bridge end were so crowded that the boy had no little difficulty in reaching Cornhill, which was indeed a rare sight on that day.

The whole street was bright as a herald's coat with hangings and flags; overhead the bells of the crowded city churches clashed and pealed deafeningly, above the muffled murmur of the crowd, whose coloured costumes made a flower-bed of the famous thoroughfare. The train bands, clothed for the occasion in new uniforms, kept a clear path down the centre of the street.

Over the great conduit a pavilion had been built. On this stood a company of men, hairy and wild of aspect, "The Fellowship of the Prophets."

Threading his way under the overhanging houses,

Baldwin slowly descended the hill to the other great conduit at the eastern end of Cheapside. Here was assembled "The Company of the Apostles," solemn men in coloured cloaks. With them were twelve Kings of England, "Martyrs and Confessors," bearded, stately figures, with gilt haloes about their crowned heads.

Behind rose the Cross of Cheapside, now hidden by a huge tower, flanked by arched gateways, all of wood and painted canvas. The top of the tower was crowded with youths, wearing wings and figuring the Holy Angels. On a platform beneath were ranged girls in rich robes, who, as the King advanced, hailed him with joyous cries of "Noel, Noel! Welcome Henry the Fifte, Kynge of England and France!"

While the procession halted to acknowledge the greeting, Baldwin, crossing to the northern side of the way, paused opposite Bow Church to look with delight at the splendour of Chepe.

The famous street, the very heart of London, with its quaint houses projecting story upon story, many richly carved and the homes of wealthy merchants, was hung from the eaves to the ground with tapestries and costly hangings, for those who lived in them were well used to pageants; not infrequently indeed tournaments were held in the more open parts of the thoroughfare. From windows, balconies, and platforms the proudest ladies of England, flaming with gold and jewels, looked out upon the procession, saluting the conqueror. As he passed, showers of leaves of gilt paper glittered down upon him; at every corner groups of children dressed in white sang hymns in his honour.

At the western end of Chepe, across the conduit, hung a broad canopy fashioned to resemble floating clouds; among them blazed a gilt sun surrounded by archangels, symbolical of God among His heavenly hosts. Above the houses, rising to an incredible height, thrust the great tower, the buttresses, and gables of Paul's, where a number of bishops and clergy were awaiting the King.

While Henry paused to receive their salutations, and to "offer," as the saying was, Baldwin pressed on to the top

of Ludgate Hill, where, beyond the steep road, the archway, and the muddy Fleet, he had glimpses of noblemen's houses set in beautiful gardens that stretched to the river.

As he stood here the procession overtook him, for it was faring to St. Peter's Church at Westminster, where the King would dine in the Red King's Hall. But the boy was not minded to follow it farther, for he had been afoot since the dawn, and three miles lay between the City and Westminster; moreover the road thither, beyond the walls, was not over safe after sundown, especially in the dark autumn evenings.

So he halted, and suffered the King to go by, eagerly watching that eagle of a man, the calm of whose countenance, as he afterwards somewhat fancifully imagined, even then was touched with an unearthly dignity, doubtless the shadow of premature death.

Behind the conqueror, closely guarded, went the prisoners. In the van was the poet-duke, with his strange smile, riding to the banquet at Westminster and to his long captivity in the Savoy; his eyes fixed on the dim sun that, far away to south, was setting on his own beautiful city by the Loire.

XIX

AN IRISH ADVENTURER (FIFTEENTH CENTURY)

“**T**HAT is the head ; the highest of all—right up above the others on that long pole. It is a sad sight to see all those heads of men who once lived as we do ; but I tell you, my boy, that in my opinion it is a good thing that that particular head is up there on the end of a pole, and not turning to the right and left upon its owner’s shoulders.”

“But, Master Green, tell me what you mean. Why was Jack Cade so dangerous, and what did he do to deserve death ?”

“Well, Hal, he did many wrong things. Other men also go astray, but this man committed one unpardonable deed. He stirred Englishmen up to such strife and disorder that they robbed and murdered innocent people. I hold that a man who does so deserves death.”

“I wish, Master, that you would tell me all about it. You see I’ve only come up to London lately. In the north where I lived we heard rumours of disorder, but it was not till I came hither that I even so much as heard of Jack Cade. Now that I have seen his head on yonder pole, methinks I would fain know more of the man and his deeds.”

“True, Hal, it is wise to be informed. Seeing that I took part in the battle at London Bridge, and fought on the drawbridge near the Southwark side, I can tell you much. Further, my good dame Anne had her home in Kent, and she gets news from that county. She has heard how the rebel was found and captured. Let us lean here against this barrier, and, while old Thames goes seaward, I will tell you all I know.

"No one is very pleased at the way matters are proceeding in France. Our glory has departed since Joan the Maid was cruelly burned at Rouen. Very soon now, I expect, we shall be left with only Calais, our strongly fortified port. I say, lad, no one loves to think of that. Still there is no need for murder. We had a statesman, the Duke of Suffolk, who, perhaps, was responsible for some of our failure; certainly not for all, for the mischief started before his time. Not long since, as he was sailing towards Calais, suddenly a royal ship, called the *Nicholas of the Tower*, sailed across his bows, took the wind from his ship, and in a trice men had leaped from the *Nicholas of the Tower* and laid hold on Suffolk. He was carried aboard the King's ship amid the cry of "Welcome, Traitor!" Next day, one of the lowest men in the ship, an Irishman, cut off the Duke's head with a rusty sword. Then they brought his body and flung it upon the English coast, to show that not even the King's favour could save a man from the judgment of the people.

"Now, Hal, remember this. Any such disorderly act as that simply invites further disorder. Violence spreads through the body politic as rapidly as disease spreads through the natural body. It was only a few weeks after that the uprising occurred in Kent. Strange to say an Irishman was connected with this ugly business, just as with the former. I call him an Irish adventurer. That's his head up yonder. His name among his fellows was Jack Cade. He may have been a reasonable man in private life. I know not. This I do know. He tried to bring the country into disorder—may all who strive to bring England low, whether they be nobles or commoners, meet a felon's death as he has done! He talked, and produced discontent, spoke treason and acted treason, till he had a host of fellows as ill-conditioned as himself, a rabble of Kentish hogs, and led them to Blackheath. Meanwhile he gave out that he was a son of the Earl of March; and men were fools enough to believe him.

"This London of ours, the greatest and best city in the world, always has to suffer the most in our nation's calamities. I know, Hal, that you people up north have

a high opinion of yourselves, but credit me, you will have to show many centuries of high conduct and noble bearing before you can hope to rank side by side with the Londoners. Only people ignorant of London's history scorn London. Time and time again the Londoners have saved England, and so it was this year of grace, 1450, when Cade, having overcome the King's forces, turned his steps towards this great city. Men say that at first he kept order among his followers. It may have been so. All I can say is that I did not see much order in their ranks. They soon got out of hand, slew the King's ministers, and, when their sympathisers in this city were mad enough to let them into our streets, their thanks was to loot and destroy the citizens' houses. Cade issued a notice from the White Hart, Southwark, prohibiting murder, rape, or robbery. He might as well, Hal, have told the Thames to stop flowing at London Bridge. His Kentish folk had tasted London, and wished for more.

"Well, Jack Cade entered London, cut through the ropes of the drawbridge, laid his sword on London Stone, saying, 'Now is Mortimer Lord of this City,' and rode like a lordly captain in every street. Yea, he caused Sir John Fynes to be arraigned at the Guildhall, and, because the business was not rapid enow, he had his head cut off in the Cheape, and carried before him like a standard on a pole. So also with Sir James Cromer, Sheriff of Kent. And, to make him sport, this bloody butcher had the two heads bobbing before him, causing them to kiss together in every street, till the people of the City loathed the sight.

"Then disorder broke loose. The house of Philip Malpas, Alderman of London, was grievously assaulted, notable merchants were fined, as, for example, Alderman Robert Horne, who paid 500 marks; people were executed in Southwark, and so the matter went forward till good men and true began to see that an end must be made of this Kentish business. Wherefore the wise Mayor and sage magistrates conferred with Lord Scales, Keeper of the Tower, and with Matthew Gough, the valiant captain in Normandy, and they took upon them to keep this Bridge of London, so that the Kentish folk might not pass.

Thus came about the fight upon the Bridge, a terrible stubborn fight, where I, with my own eyes, saw Gough, who had passed through such dire dangers in France, fall beneath the hands of his own countrymen. Yea, and I saw houses burned, and women with children in their arms leaping into the Thames for safety. But, though the fight continued all the night, and until nine o' the clock next morning, yet the Londoners still held the Bridge, and the Kentish men were on the Southwark side.

“Jack Cade, needing more helpers for his Kentish rabble, broke up the gaols of King's Bench and Marshalsea. Our leaders, urged by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Winchester, offered a general pardon under the King's Seal to all offenders. Lord, how glad the poor people were of this pardon! They accepted it and, without bidding farewell to their captain, they retired forthwith, every man to his own home, as men amazed and stricken with fear.

“Jack Cade, seeing himself abandoned by reason of his own violence, saw fit to withdraw secretly and in disguise. No longer did he make any display of nobility. He donned some simple garb, and betook him straight away into Sussex. Yet this disguise was of little avail. A Proclamation was issued offering 1000 marks for any who should apprehend him, and I have heard from my wife's folk how it was that Cade was taken.

“One Alexander Iden, an esquire of Kent, walking one morning in his garden, caught sight of a man creeping under a box-tree. There was that about the man's action which made him suspicious. He ran up and, dragging him out, demanded his name. Cade drew a dagger and flung himself at Iden; but he, being a sturdy man, struck him a blow which laid the rebel on the ground, and when men came to examine him he was dead. So they brought his body to London, and set the caitiff's head on yonder pole for all the world to see. This is the end of all rebels, and this fortune ever befalls them. For, where men strive against the stream, their boat comes to this fate.

“Such is the story, Hal, and in conclusion I would say

this. Do not confuse this wild, unnecessary rising with those of former days. You remember how the peasants rose a hundred years ago? There was hunger under their rage; they were downtrodden and ill-treated, and they rose for their rights. These later rebels were not forced by hunger; they were discontented with the Government of this land. All sane men can see for themselves that much is wrong, and they may desire the wrong to be set right. But you cannot cure one disorder by introducing another. Nor can you bring about a better government by putting forward a traitor and murderer like Jack Cade. No, Hal, in a land like ours the best way is to influence those in authority over us by the firm and reasonable attitude of the nation as a whole. What is the use of Parliament if the members cannot put wrongs right without bloodshed in our streets?

“And now, Hal, let’s to dinner. Methinks all this talk has given me a longing for a tankard of good brown ale.”

XX

MY VOYAGE FROM VENICE TO STOURBRIDGE FAIR (FIFTEENTH CENTURY)

ONE day when I was nearly sixteen years of age my father said to me, "Filippo, my son, how would you care to come with me on my next voyage?" I jumped for joy, for this was just what I had been yearning for week in and week out. Do you really mean it, father?" I asked. He smiled and said, "It is time you began to see the world, Filippo; and if you like to come you shall sail with the Flanders Fleet next Monday."

Never was a boy so excited as I was; never did boy so long for the days to hurry by. It seems long ago now, and I can smile at my boyish eagerness. What I did in the meantime except dream, I know not, for the next thing that I remember plainly is standing by my father's side as the great galleys slipped from their moorings at the quay and, swept along by their oars, they glided out towards the blue lagoon, leaving behind them the dream city lying beneath the cupola of St. Mark's. By now the sails were hoisted. Our ship, *La Stella del Mare*, had three masts and three swelling sails. The little sail at the fore was red with a great winged horse worked in green on a white circle; the main sail was striped white and red; the sail in the high poop at the stern was white, with a great blue star in the centre. Our Venetian flags streamed in the breeze, and the great oars lashed the waves into showers of white foam that sparkled gloriously in the sun. For a time I stood spellbound, looking here and there, lost in the novelty of the scene. How the crew bent to their oars, how the sails rustled, how stately the

other galleys looked as they came swimming after us like a flock of beautiful birds! Then I became conscious of my father's glance, and he put his hand on my shoulder, and said, "It is more than forty years ago that I sailed for the first time with the Fleet."

We made good sailing, for the weather was fine and favourable, and we were glad, for our vessels bore a rich cargo. You know, perhaps, that Venice at the time I am speaking of, namely, the end of the fifteenth century, was the centre of the world's trade. We stand, so to speak, between the East and the West, and we receive trade from one hemisphere to pass it on to the other. Each year we send out three main fleets. These are—the Flanders Fleet, with which I was sailing; the Egyptian Fleet; and the Black Sea Fleet. Our Government sends a convoy of war vessels with each fleet, and tells the captains what route they must take, how long the voyage must be, what ports to touch at, when to arrive, and when to depart. Thus all our trade is regulated. We had on board on this voyage a great cargo for the English: Venice exports, silks, velvets, laces, satins, fine damasks, cotton, costly garments, dyed goods, and gilded leather, Eastern spices, precious stones, brass and iron hardware, camphor, saffron, and fire-arms! I am told that altogether we had then at least 3000 merchant ships in the Venetian navy, and 300 war vessels. These employed about £7,000,000 of mercantile capital, and at least 1000 merchant princes in Venice followed the adventures of these fleets with very anxious eyes.

We sailed slowly along the shores of the Mediterranean, calling at ports in Italy, the south of France, and Spain; we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, and reached the Bay of Biscay, where the Gascon whalers were busy. It was there that we had our first bad weather. The sea leapt high up above our vessels, black and hissing; our sails were lowered, for our captain dared not expose them to the furious wind; and our galley was kept as steady as our crew could keep it with their oars, while wind and tide drifted us along. I felt very ill, I remember, and lay like a log on the lower deck amongst the rowers, not much



MY FIRST VOYAGE WITH THE VENETIAN FLEET

caring what happened. We were in that plight, cold and wretchedly wet for days, till the weather mended. Then, as the sea calmed down and the wind moderated, up went our sails again, and we forged steadily ahead. Then we rounded the coast of North-West France, and sailed in fairly calm water up the English Channel—as they call it sometimes—till we reached the Downs. By then we were a smaller company, for some of our ships had gone to the English port of Southampton, others had put into a port called Rye, while some others, acting on instructions, had gone to French ports. From the Downs the main fleet sailed north-east to Flanders; but four of our ships left the rest and, heading for the English coast, held steadily along the shore till we reached a river called the Ouse. I wish I could tell you fully about the long white line of cliffs which we saw on the southern English coast, the beautiful appearance of green fields and splendid trees, the wide mouth of the river Thames; but I must pass on, for I have much to tell you about the Fair at Stourbridge.

Well, when we entered the mouth of the Ouse, we found waiting for us a perfect fleet of barges. If our vessel had been smaller, we could have sailed up to the Fair, or rather to Cambridge, for Stourbridge Fair is quite close to that city, famous I am told for a university. Our ships were too large, however, so all our goods had to be transhipped, and a close eye we kept, you may be sure, as the precious things were carried up on deck and lowered into the barges. My father never went below till everything was put out, and then he took me with him on to one of the barges, on each of which we posted guards. It was now slow sailing; but I did not mind much about that; it was so interesting to see the English towns and villages. I had never dreamed that there could be such places and such quaint houses. My father spoke English well, and I had learned the language to some extent from him; but the speech of the men on the barges seemed very strange, and I could not follow all of it perfectly. The English weather charmed me; but I was told that I must not judge the English year by the month of

August. They said that in the winter it rains for days at a time, and the weather is often bitterly cold. When I sailed up the Ouse, it was under bright sunshine, clear and golden, yet not over warm, and at night, as I lay on the deck of the barge, the sky was crowded with silver stars, and not a cloud was to be seen. It seemed just perfect. I lay awake to watch the shooting stars.

When we came to the Fair all was bustle and excitement. This is the greatest of all English fairs, and merchants gathered to it from all over Europe. One could hear Italians, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Norwegians, Germans, even Russians, talking, and bargaining among themselves, and with the cool, calm-eyed English folk. They never seem to get excited like the others, those English, and yet my father told me they could drive a bargain quite as well, if not better, than other people. For the time being the fields were turned into canvas streets—just long lines of stalls, tents, booths, packed with a perfect medley of merchandise. Some of those streets were called after different nations; others were named according to the things sold there. I recollect one street called “The Drapery”; another was styled “The Pottery”; yet another went by the description “The Spicery”; and so forth. Before we could get in we had to pay tolls at the bridges, and along the roadway, and my father grumbled like a bear with a sore head; but it was no use, he had to pay. Oh! the merchandise—tar and pitch, wax, furs and amber, flax, herrings, wool, barley and corn, horses and cattle, wines, and metals of all descriptions. The weather turned warm, and the smell of the wares was overpowering. The people also were a sight to see. It seems that the trade is governed by bodies called merchant and craft guilds, and the officers of these were wonderfully dressed and easily distinguishable. They had great power and authority. The people from the country around had flocked in by thousands; there were shows of every sort; mountebanks, jugglers, musicians, tricksters mingled with the buyers and sellers, and sometimes my head ached with the noise and sight-seeing. We had to leave long before

the end of the Fair. It lasted for a whole month, right till the end of September.

Of course we did not return with empty ships. Some of our merchandise we sold for gold straight away; but some was exchanged for goods we needed. Then again a considerable portion of these commodities we sold as we returned at the various ports of call. When we got back to Venice, after nearly a year's absence, and my father went over his books, he told me it had been a very profitable voyage, taking all things into account. Anyhow my mother and sisters had costly new dresses and things, and that was proof enough that my father was satisfied.

I wish, sometimes, that those days would come again. I am a merchant now myself, but trade is not what it used to be when I was a boy. For reasons I cannot give you now, our trade steadily declined. The last year our fleet visited England was in 1532, and, as I am not so young as I used to be, I expect I shall never see that country again; but I often think of that pleasant land, of its lovely fields and woods, and sweet twilight across the quiet fens.

XXI

THE MARCHING WATCH (1510)

ON St. John's Eve, 1510, little Walter and Marian Barton had not gone to bed at their usual hour.

Their grandfather, Nicholas Barton, merchant, at whose house in Chepe they were staying during the illness of their mother at Ashford in Kent, had suffered them to sit up, that they might see the Marching Watch pass by, a very gallant show in which some 2000 men would take part.

The pageant would start from the little conduit by Paul's Gate, and march through West Chepe, past the stocks to Cornhill, Leadenhall, and Aldgate; thence, down Fenchurch Street, by Grace Church and the street of that name, back to Cornhill and West Chepe, there to dismiss. The circuit was some two miles in all, and along it, at intervals of a few paces, a cresset would blaze; no less than 700 in all; a noble show, but costly and of greater cost every year, so that many debated whether it would not be well that it should cease, wherefore he wished the children to witness it.

Marian and Walter sat in the wide bay of the window of a room on the first floor. It was a stately apartment, wainscoted with fine oak, on which hung paintings by Venetian limners, picturing the heathen gods of the Grecians. On the polished wooden floor stood a carved oak table and chairs; a curious Eastern lamp, in which pale tongues of flame glittered, hung from the stuccoed ceiling. The casements were glazed with small lozenges of clear glass, far more beautiful, the children thought, than the oiled linen and horn that filled the windows of their Kentish home. The upper part of the casements was

bright with coloured glass painted with figures of strange beasts. Below the windows stood wide open. Through them, in the warm gold and purple of the summer twilight they saw the tall houses of Chepe, richly carved and projecting story on story over the street into which the children were looking eagerly.

The stalls and rich mercery shops were closed. On either side upon tall posts flamed scores of cressets that turned the street into an avenue of fire, filled by a dense crowd. Never had the children seen such a motley throng; there were merchants, apprentices, serving-maids, hawkers, men in armour, and foreigners in strange garments, notably yonder in the portal of the church, where stood a negro and two bearded Eastern men, richly dressed and recalling the Three Wise Kings.

Among the crowd also, a sad sight, were many beggars in squalid rags; beings disfigured by loathsome diseases; and, more pitiful still, men and women horribly branded or maimed by the merciless laws of the time; human wrecks who, tempted by the show, had ventured out of the purlieus of the great city. Their wretchedness, only too plainly revealed by the fierce light, contrasted painfully with the appearance of their more fortunate neighbours.

A glittering line of watchmen with flashing halberds fenced a path, down the middle of the street. The windows of the houses, washed by the light of the cressets, were filled with faces gilded by the flames.

Inside the room, Master Nicholas and his wife sat by their grandchildren at the open window.

A distant burst of trumpets rang out.

"Oh! behold them! Behold them!" cried Marian.

At the west end of Chepe, lights were tossing, and slowly with brisk fifeing and drumming the Marching Watch advanced, company by company, between the files of the constables and guards. Before each company marched whiffers and fifers, cheeks puffed and fingers nimble; with them drummers whose drums leapt about their knees under the flashing sticks.

Behind them in the glare tossed standards and ensigns,

each followed by sundry companies; lancers riding great horses and shadowed by a grove of tall spears; gunners bearing hand-guns; archers in white fustian blazoned on breast and back with the city arms, a sheaf of arrows at their belts, and drawn bows, half raised before them, in their hands; pikemen in bright corselets, with shouldered pikes; billmen in almain rivets above aprons of silver mail, and bearing bills that flashed in the light of the cressets. Between the troops of soldiers capered bands of morris dancers, all their bells ajingling to time.

A brighter tide of flame crept slowly up the street. It was a band of sixscore constables, each in armour, that of no few richly gilt. All wore a sleeveless coat of scarlet, falling to the knee; golden chains gleamed about their necks. Every constable was attended by two men wearing hats of straw with badges painted on them. One of these men bore a cresset on a pole, the other a bag of tow dipped in pitch wherewith to feed the flame, and also a lantern to light it if it should fail.

As the constables passed, like a moving grove of trees all ablaze, the children's eyes were blinded by the light, and their throats filled with the fumes of blazing pitch.

Again the air shook with vigorous music, and the King's officers went by in parti-coloured sea-jackets or worsted liveries. They were followed by a horseman in armour, holding a drawn sword upright before him, among a crowd of footmen, in the midst of which, towering higher than the horsemen, moved a monstrous giant—a creature of pasteboard and skins borne by a strong fellow hidden within him. The children shrank as the huge face with white, rolling eyeballs reeled by level with the window.

Immediately after, on horseback and in stately robes, came the Lord Mayor, encircled by attendants bearing lighted torches, and followed by two tall men on great horses richly caparisoned. After them in state rode the sheriffs, each preceded by musicians, mounted soldiers, torch-bearers, and a giant, huge, but not so prodigious as that which accompanied the Lord Mayor.

So the pageant passed, the smoke dissolved, and the night lay clear overhead lit by the pale summer stars.

Inside the room lamps were trimmed, neighbours came in, and the company sat down to pasties, cold fowl, custards, and florentines, awaiting the return of the Watch.

In the street below hawkers sold wastel-cakes, cherries, and strawberries; the cook-shops and the ale-houses in the neighbouring alleys rang with shouts and laughter; musicians struck up with pipe, lute, and tabor.

At length trumpets sounded at the east end of Chepe, and the returning pageant rolled by. The cressets were now burning low; smoke streamed over the tired crowds; the marching feet had lost somewhat of their swing; the music was less vigorous; the very giants stumbled on their way more wearily, with huge, smoke-sullied faces and staring eyes.

At the corner of Chepe, by Paul's, the music and tramping came to a pause, and the children, thrusting their heads through the casements, saw the procession melt and vanish in sundry directions under the guttering cressets.

"And now, rogues, to bed!" said their grandmother. "See, what big, heavy eyes my little Marian hath for lack of sleep. So to your chambers, and look you do not dream of those same staring giants. Nay, my poppets, but I saw ye both shrink back when they went by!"

XXII

THE MERCHANTS OF THE STEELYARD (SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

“**C**OME along, Ralph, and let us see the King’s officers seize their liberty. ’Twill be a fine show. Father tells me that the Hanse merchants have been established here in London for at least three hundred years.”

“Well, Jack, England for the English, say I. Why should we harbour a crowd of German merchants in our midst? Nay, worse than that, we not only harbour them, but they take our trade, and look upon us as foreigners in our own city.”

“True, Ralph, they have high stomachs. I like not their German looks. Still, I have heard folk say that years since it was good for England to have these strangers here. I should like to know more of the matter. Ah! There is young Master Stow, the tailor. He could tell us all we wish to know, if he cared to do so. Father says his one joy in life is to come across some account of old London and write down what he learns. You know him; he lives near the well within Aldgate, not far from your house.”

“Know him, Jack? Why, he is one of my best friends.”

“Good morrow, Master Stow! This is Ralph Norland, my schoolfellow; we are going to see the King’s officers seize the liberty of the Steelyard merchants. We were saying, even now, that we would fain know more of the history of these people, and why they are being prevented from trading in our midst.”

“Good morrow, Jack. Good morrow, Ralph. So you

wish to learn about the Hanse merchants of the Steelyard? If you care to come with me for half an hour to my house, I can tell you all you wish to know, and there will still be time for you to get down to Thames Street by midday, when the young King Edward's officers deal with these people."

"I thank you courteously, Master Stow. Ralph and I will come with pleasure."

"Come along, then, boys. Here is Threadneedle Street, where my father used to live. That is where our old summer-house stood when Thomas Cromwell seized our ground. Ah! the old days—they were sad times, were they not? We had better go across Bishopsgate Within and down Leadenhall Street to the Well. You know my house, Ralph?"

"Yes, Master Stow, just by where the bailiff of Romford was executed."

"'Twas upon the threshold of my door, Ralph. There, now, I'm standing upon the very spot. Come in, boys, and let me get my notes. I like to have my parchments before me, lest I make mistakes. All my books are in this old chest, and are arranged, as you see, in order. Come now—the Steelyard; here it is; always put a thing where you can find it; there's a lesson quite as useful as any grammar you can learn at school. Sit down, now, and listen. I am going to give you a little lesson in history, partly from my notes and partly from my memory."

"Long ago, when the Germans and Danes were competing in trade, the Germans clearly understood that there were three outlets for their goods—towards Italy, along the French border, and towards the north and north-east. Well, there was a struggle between the Emperors and the Popes in those bygone days and this spoiled the Italian trade; France took good care of her own border line. That left, as you see, the north and north-east—the regions towards Russia and along the Baltic. Germany began to expand in that direction, and, as her trade grew, her merchants wished to protect it from robbers of every degree, high and low. For in

those days kings and emperors, counts and knights stole at their pleasure, somewhat after Thomas Cromwell's manner with our old summer-house. Therefore we find these merchants forming bands to protect their goods on land and sea. There were three great Leagues, namely, the Rhenish League, which looked after trade on the Rhine, the Swabian League to guard the cities of the Danube, and, lastly, the League of the Hanse, which began by the union of two cities, Hamburg and Lübeck.

"As this League grew, it became a military power with a powerful army and fleet. When the Crusades took place, the merchants of the League sent their ships to take part in the expedition to the Holy Land. They also began to establish factories, or stations in important places, and, of these, four became more wealthy than the others. I refer to those at Bruges, London, Novgorod, and Bergen. I must not stop to tell you of the good work the League did in those days, how they trained apprentices, developed towns, worked mines, built splendid houses and churches. They did all those things and others. It was, undoubtedly, a good thing for a country to have a factory of the Hanse in its midst, for, in the old lawless days, these merchants taught the value of luxury, culture, and refinement, as well as the advantage of unity. Unity is strength, and their banding together kept greedy and unscrupulous kings from doing mischief.

"Of course, I cannot tell you what happened elsewhere, but I have found out that in the year 1259, in the reign of Henry III, the merchants of Almaine, or Germany, were trading here in London in wheat, rye, and sundry grains, cables, ropes, masts, pitch, tar, flax, hemp, cloth, wainscots, wax, steel, and other profitable merchandise.

"In that year Richard, Earl of Cornwall, requested his brother, the King, to grant these merchants special liberties in their house in the city of London. This house was called *Gilda Aula Teutonicorum*. It was east from Downgate by the river. So these merchants were licensed to build houses and storehouses on their ground. Edward I renewed their charter. They seem to have become somewhat high-handed by those days, for when

part of their property in Bishopsgate was likely to fall for want of repair, the matter had to be dealt with by the King, before these Germans could be forced to do the work. He made them pay out to the mayor and citizens two hundred and ten marks for repairs, and they promised that they and their successors would look after the gate for the future. So they went on establishing themselves. After a time we find them having their own aldermen to mete out justice for them in the courts. So great was their interference with trade that Englishmen suffered by the Hanse practice of bringing corn into the land, when it was already very plentiful.

"Well, Ralph and Jack, thus did these Hanse merchants live and thrive in their Guildhall in Thames Street, just by Cosin Lane. 'Tis the place you are going to see this morning, the large stone hall with the three arched gates towards the street, which building we call the Old Hall.

"As their trade grew they hired other places. One was down Windgoose Alley, with a large wharf on the Thames. They built all the buildings along that alley. In Edward IV's time we find that sovereign lord granting to the Hanse merchants the place called the Steelhouse for an annual rent of £70, 3s. 4d., and their successors to have, hold, and enjoy for ever.

"Edward IV might promise such a thing, but he could not see his promise carried out. Times change, boys, and we change with them. The world has altered since the times of Edward IV. We do not need German merchants to teach us how to trade. We can do that as well as they. Besides, why should they possess rights over the heads of Englishmen? Theirs is a sort of state within a state. People saw that long since, and the Steelyard has seen some troubled times. I have heard that—not so many years ago—the crowd grew so angry with these stiff and greedy Germans that they went in a mass to the Steelyard to do what our authorities seemed loath to do—to wit, turn them out. The merchants had wind of their intention, and, by the time the gates were battered down, they had fled for safety to the other side of the river. But it seems difficult to get rid of a German. Little by

little they crept back again, till once more they were ensconced in their old haunts, trading on English good nature, and getting the best of everything. Why, boys, we actually had a fleet of our own by the time of Henry VII, for 'twas he who built the *Great Harry* to guard our coasts: there was no need for us to use the Hanse fleet, nor has there been for years past. If we can do without the visits of the Venetian fleet, surely we can do without these merchants of Almaine. What think you?"

"Well, Master Stow, I said to Jack just before we met you, I believe in England for the English."

"Good, Ralph! Always do the best you can for your own country. 'Tis a wonderful land, and this London of ours is a noble city. The more I know about it, the more I marvel at its greatness. Some day, perchance, I may be able to give the world all I have learned. Slowly I am piecing it together here in this chest; but, for the present, my trade takes so much of my time. And, by the way, friend Jack, an you will allow me, I would fain employ my needle and thread about that sad tear in your doublet. Methinks you have been climbing hastily over some wall with a spike in it! Ah, I thought so! Never blush, boy. I was a lad myself, not so long since, and loved the taste of an apple. There! now you can meet them all at home with an easy heart. Hark! The three-quarters past eleven. Our history-lesson is done for to-day. You must hurry off to Thames Street or you will miss the sight. Good-bye, Ralph! Good-bye, Jack! Come to John Stow another day and learn some more from him."

XXIII

AN ENGLISH BOY IN RUSSIA (SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

MANY men come home from across the seas in these days of good Queen Bess, and many are the strange tales they tell us of the lands they have visited—lands where the palm-tree grows and the rich earth brings forth fruits of wondrous kinds ; lands that are golden with sunshine, clothed with abundant foliage—warm, fragrant, spice-laden isles of the southern seas. Yet, as I recall the past, once again I am a boy in the days of Queen Mary, living amid the sadder England of more than thirty years ago, treading the streets of London and working at my daily tasks at school.

I should like to live my boyhood through once again, but especially should I delight in those days when I too sailed the seas and beheld strange lands across the waters. The lands I visited were by no means golden, abundant, or fragrant. I have no strange story of men whose heads grow beneath their shoulders ; no marvels to relate of vast caverns or wide stretch of the desert ; yet my voyage was to me all sufficient. I saw sights which I shall never forget, and sojourned among a folk truly as strange and foreign to us as any people that dwell upon this earth ; for I went to Russia in Queen Mary's reign, sailed up the great waterways of that silent land, and lived for months amid snow and ice such as few Englishmen have ever seen.

I, William Sanderson, a peaceful citizen of London, have seen all these things in my youth, and, because I am a good Protestant, loving truth above all things, I declare to you here and now that my story is true, and that all

I relate to you is fact, and not fancy. It is not my wish to describe a play upon the stage of the Globe or the Curtain, but to tell you things of real life.

When I left school, I desired earnestly to go to sea, and beset my father so sorely with argument and pleading that at last he gave his consent, and I went aboard the *Primrose*, a goodly ship lying off Gravesend. The parting from my mother made me very sad, yet such is the humour of youth that, amid the bustle aboard ship and the newness of life, I soon revived and strove earnestly to please my masters. The news had gone forth that we were to sail to Russia, bearing home one who had been sent as an ambassador from the mighty Emperor of that land to the Court of Queen Mary. When this ambassador, Osep Gregorivich Napea, came on board with his retinue, the order came from our admiral to make sail, and full soon the *Primrose*, with the *John Evangelist*, the *Anne*, and the *Trinity*, her attendants, was gliding along the Thames out to the grey North Sea.

It was on the 12th of May that we left Gravesend, and on the 13th of July we dropped anchor in St. Nicholas Bay, where Master Osep went ashore to the Abbey of St. Nicholas. I stood leaning over the side of the *Primrose*, longing to go with the English who were accompanying this ambassador to the Court of the great Emperor. Perhaps my looks told of my wishes, perhaps I had shown myself a willing lad aboard ship; yet, for some cause or other, one Master Standish, doctor in physic, came up to me and said, "William, wouldst like to come to the Court of the Emperor with me?" "Yes, sir," quoth I; "that is indeed what I desire above all things." "Well, then, my boy," he replied, "the captain gives consent and you may come as my attendant."

On the 20th of July we set forth, a numerous company, and, since Master Osep was with us, we were warmly welcomed. At Kholmogory we received gifts of white bread, rye bread, buttered bread and pancakes, beef, mutton, bacon, eggs, butter, fish, swans, geese, ducks, hens, and every sort of victual. Master Standish bade me to be moderate in my eating, lest the rich diet should

make me sick. Towards the end of August we left our barques and travelled on in small one-horse wagons, which carried us and our staff from Vologda unto Moscow, a distance of 500 versts. On our way we passed a river called the Volga, which, men said, runs into the Caspian Sea through fifty mouths; near to the same sea is a great city named Bokhara.

Moscow is a city that does much business in spices, musk, ambergris, rhubarb, and other drugs. Large stores of furs are brought there from Siberia, and these are much in request by reason of the cold climate. For us, however, the great and interesting point about the city was that the mighty Emperor resided there; and, by the courtesy of Master Standish, I soon had a chance of seeing Ivan the Terrible, for I was chosen to stand behind the physician's chair while meat was served at the great banquet given in honour of the Englishmen. Truly to look at Ivan was not a pleasing sight, yet his attire was very gorgeous, for he was clad in a gown of rich tissue of cloth of gold and decked with costly Orient pearls, sapphires, and diamonds. His golden crown was lined with black sable, and was of wondrous workmanship inset with jewels which shone like the stars, and above them all, upon a thin wire, flamed a flashing ruby as large as a good-sized bean. His garments sparkled in the light as he sat upon his throne, bearing in his left hand a staff of goldsmith's work, and extending his right hand for the Englishmen to kiss. Master Standish told me later on that the Emperor's hands were not over-clean, and his nails were long as claws.

The tables at first held only salt and bread; but, anon, servants brought in vessels of pure and fine gold, as well as basins and ewers, platters, dishes, and saucers, as also great pots and small pots, many of which were set with jewels. Wines and meads were plentiful, and there was an abundance of rich food. No one touched his food, however, till the Emperor had sent each man a piece of bread delivered with these words, "The Emperor and great Duke giveth thee bread this day"; and likewise with the drinks it was proclaimed, "The Emperor and great

Duke giveth thee to drink." He himself blessed his food before he touched a morsel, and also he blessed before he drank. After our arrival home, servants came bearing three barrels of mead of sundry sorts to make us merry.

Master Standish gave the sovereign great satisfaction, for there were sent to him at various times furred gowns of branched velvet and gold, and some of red damask. Some of these were furred with sables, others with white ermine or grey squirrel, and all were faced and edged round about with black beaver; again, there came a present of seventy roubles, and so forth; Tartary horses were provided for us to ride through the foul and miry streets of Moscow until winter had fully set in.

Thus, with visits and banquets, the days passed by, and there came upon us the snow and ice, and Christmas-tide, and, on the twelfth day of the year, the blessing of the river Moskva. On Christmas Day there dined in the Emperor's presence 500 strangers and 200 Russians, and all were served in vessels of gold, and that as much as could stand one by another upon the tables. Moreover, I saw four cupboards thick set with goodly gold and silver plate, among which were twelve barrels of silver, each containing about twelve gallons apiece; each barrel was hooped at the ends with six bands of gold. The dinner that day lasted about six hours.

The cold was bitter. Had it not been for our furs, plentiful food, and heated houses, we could not have endured. Yet, as I recall it—the banquets, church processions lighted with wax tapers and lanterns, rich with banners, images, and the great cross borne before the Metropolitan, his priests, the Emperor and his nobles, the vast crowds about the river-side where the water was sanctified; the neighing of horses; the games upon the ice; the discharge of ordnance at pieces of ice set up upon stages; the shouts and cries; the rush of sledges over the snow—it all seemed like some strange, rapidly moving dream.

Easter soon came with its festivals. The Russians kept Easter very solemnly. I noticed that on Easter Day they had numerous eggs dyed with brazil, and every man and

woman gave one of these to the priest on Easter morning. On that day, and for several following days, the poorer folk carried about one of these red eggs in their hands; the nobles had gilded eggs in like manner. They use these eggs as a token of the Resurrection, and for a great love. For, when two friends meet during these holy days, one takes the other by the hand and says, "Christ is risen." The other replies, "It is so, of a truth." Then they kiss and exchange eggs, both men and women, and they continue in kissing four days together. Methinks you have never seen such a sight as that in our English streets.

At last, on the 12th of April, being Tuesday in Easter week, His Emperor's Majesty graciously gave us licence to depart; yet, before we departed, we were summoned to the Chancery to see the crown, the jewels, and all the Emperor's robes and stores of wealth. After we had gazed our fill, the Chancellor charged us upon our arrival in our own land to see if we could provide such jewels, rich clothes, and wealth as we had seen there, for, if we could, the Emperor would gladly purchase them for his treasury.

I have told you but a tithe of what I beheld. To describe the strange customs and ceremonies of their religion would take far too long. I saw one coffin covered with cloth of gold, in which, they said, lay a man who had worked miracles. There were people who had knobs upon their foreheads as great as eggs caused by their knocking their heads against the holy images. I saw a child's baptism, and beheld his eyes and ears anointed with spittle, and his back, head, and breast painted with crosses of oil, and his hair clipped for each godparent to have some of the young and tender hairs. Again, I witnessed a wedding, and saw the bride pluck off her husband's boot; if, perchance, she finds money in the boot she plucks off, she need never pluck again; otherwise she is ever bound to pull off her husband's boots at order. I saw the colours provided by the husband for the wife to paint herself, for they grease their faces so with colours that one can behold them a bowshot away. And, anon, I

beheld a funeral, and heard the friends and kinsfolk weep, and howl, and lament, as, bearing small wax candles in their hands, they followed the coffin.

These and many other things I saw. Yet, believe me, I was not sorry when the good *Primrose*, our admiral's ship, hove in sight of the Abbey of St. Nicholas; and, when we had crossed the North Sea and had been discharged at Gravesend, never was boy so glad to hurry home with his gifts and his stories to his father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters. That was the best of all, and I think to this day of that joyful welcome home.

XXIV

HOW RICHARD HOBSON RETURNED FROM CALAIS (SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

“**A**FTER all our glory in former days, after all the shedding of English blood on the battle-fields of France, we are driven out of that fair realm, and may hang our heads in shame as a disgraced and stricken people.”

The speaker was a sturdy young Englishman, who stood leaning heavily against a post set in the road just by Smithfield. He was talking to an elderly man, clearly a merchant, who listened to him attentively, and every now and again absently stroked the long grey beard which spread over his velvet cloak. They stood apart from all others, and it was clear from their moody appearance that some grave news was being discussed by them.

“When did you return, my son?” asked the elder man.

“We landed at Dover on the 10th, and I came straight home to find you, sir, and to tell you the news. Doubtless the Queen has heard it already; but the people seem to know nothing about it so far. The times are sad enough as it is. ‘This very place where we are standing has witnessed scenes which have sickened the nation’s heart. However, so far, we have held our heads high as a free and warlike people. Now we are disgraced for ever: and I had to witness the disgrace. Oh! my father, it was hard to come forth from that old town, abandoning our heritage beneath the triumphant looks of the French.’”

“Perchance we shall regain what we have lost, Richard?”

“Not in our day; perhaps never again. But, come, come away, father, there is another of those degrading

and disgusting sights. See where they are leading that poor wretch to burn yonder—some tradesman, I suppose, whom they are hounding to death. I simply cannot, in my present mood, stand here and endure the sight and the odour. Come away.”

The elderly man put his arm gently through his son's, and together they turned in silence and made their way towards Cheapside. On arriving at the house of William Dane, the ironmonger, near Friday Street, they entered; and, being joined by him, they went upstairs to a room on the first floor, where refreshment was brought and set before them. After Richard Hobson had eaten, his father said, “Now, Richard, tell us all about it.” And the younger man began his story.

“I need not tell you how we have been fighting the battles of the hated Spaniard. You know as well as I do, that England through our Queen has become a cat's paw in the hands of the King of Spain. That our rulers had failed to see how we have merely obeyed the will of Philip is beyond my power to comprehend. They will understand more clearly now. Anyhow, I was one of the force that shared in the Spanish glory at St. Quentin, and after that battle, since there was no further use for us, our leader took us back to Calais to rest and await further instructions. That was last September, and, as my letters have shown, we have remained since then cooped up in that town. It was clear to us that His Spanish Highness cared not one jot for us, but was bent on gaining all for himself. It became more and more manifest, as the days passed by, that the French King was sharply nettled at the loss of St. Quentin, and that he was gathering a great army in readiness to strike where the blow should fall most heavily. Yea, and this I tell you, my father, our leaders had full knowledge that it was purposed to strike at Calais. They sent intelligence, again and again, to the Queen and her council. I suppose the Queen was so besotted with her Spanish husband that she could give no heed to such unimportant affairs as the guarding of our territory in France.

“At all events, the days went by, and no reinforcements

arrived. There was only our tiny force of 500 soldiers, and some 200 townsmen to assist us. Seven hundred men left to face an army, and yet there were barely twenty miles of water between England and Calais. Why, in a month you could have put thousands of good Englishmen across the Channel to succour us. Day by day we watched for the sails of the fleet that never arrived, and our hearts sank as we realized we were being left to face disaster.

"It was the Duke of Guise, 'le grand Guise,' who struck the blow. He marched towards our frontier as though he were going to carry victuals to Boulogne. Then, quite suddenly, on the first day of the New Year, he entered Boulogne and Arles, and, capturing a small bulwark, named Sandgate, divided his army into two parts, dispatching one with great pieces of artillery along the Downs towards Risbank, while the other, also furnished with battery pieces, he marched to Newnham Bridge. In a very brief time he had battered down the two forts, and possessed these outer defences. The first shot at Newnham Bridge struck off the head of Horseley, our master gunner there, so that the captain withdrew his men post-haste to Calais.

"On the 2nd of January, the French, with five double-cannons and three culverins, began to assault Calais itself. They continued firing till they had made a breach in the walls near Water Gate. Yet, as fast as they breached the walls during the day, we rebuilt them by night. It was only a trick to lead us astray, for they had no intention of trying to enter the town there. While we had been rebuilding with vigour, they had planted fifteen double-cannons against the castle. We knew this was old, and of no such force as to resist the battery, for it had no ramparts. We had, therefore, made a train with barrels of gunpowder, so that, when the French should enter, we might fire the train and blow up the keep. The French knew this, and that there was never a man within the castle to defend it; so, avoiding the train, they easily entered the place, and strove that way to force their way into Calais.

"Then Sir Anthony Ager, the Marshal of the town,

fought valiantly with his men against our foes. So bravely did they struggle that we all knew that Englishmen were still able to hold their own, and prove the ancient glory of our race; but the odds were too great. Sir Anthony drove the French back into the castle, and followed them so hotly that they were forced to close the castle gate for safety. We left sixteen gallant heroes lying on the ground before the castle, when night put an end to the conflict.

“The French held the castle, and poured their soldiers in amain, so that it became clear that Calais was doomed. Lord Wentworth sent a pursuivant named Guisnes to the Duke of Guise to ask for his terms. After a long delay we learned that these were:—

“1. That the town with all its munitions should be yielded entirely to the French King.

“2. That the lives of the inhabitants should be spared, and safe conduct granted to them to pass where they might please, saving the Lord Deputy and fifty others, who were to remain prisoners to be put to ransom.

“Then, on the next day, the French entered and took possession. All men, women, and children were ordered to leave their houses, and go to the two churches of our Lady and St. Nicholas, upon pain of death. They continued there for the remainder of that day and the following night, without meat or drink. Meanwhile all money, plate, jewels, and articles, even to the value of one groat, which they chanced to bear about them, were taken, and laid on the high altars, while the French soldiery entered and stripped the houses, finding there vast riches and treasure, with ordnance, armour, and other munitions.

“Then about two o'clock, on the 7th January, all the Englishmen, except the Lord Deputy and others reserved for prisoners, were suffered to pass out of the town, being guarded through the army by a number of Scottish Light Horsemen. In all, of men, women, and children, some 4200 came through the gate—a sorry spectacle—and we left in Calais the Lord Wentworth, Sir Ralph Chamberlain, John Harlestone, Nicholas Alexander, Edward Grimstone,

with other chief men of the town to the number of fifty, not free Englishmen any longer, but prisoners of France.

"I passed with others to the coast, and, after some delay, managed to take ship and reach Dover in safety. Thence I walked to London, where I arrived this morning, and learned that you were at Smithfield on business. That is my story, father, a pitiful story of neglect and shame. In less than eight days, Calais, our pride and glory, a town of great strength and well furnished, was taken and conquered in the depth of winter, when all the ground thereabouts being marshy is commonly overflowed with water. Calais did not fall because Englishmen have lost their valour. It fell because seven hundred men cannot fight an army. That we were not reinforced lies to the charge of our Catholic Queen and her advisers. Yet I, for one, must carry this disgrace with me for ever. The memory of our departure through the gate of Calais can never fade from my mind, and I tell you plainly that, as I think so . . . Ah! what was that? People groaning and lamenting in the street? Then the news is out, and England at last knows of her shame and low estate among the nations of Europe. Long live the Queen!"

Poor Richard Hobson! He laid his head wearily upon his hands, and his father and Master Dane saw the bitter tears trickle down upon the table.

XXV

THE BEACON ON THE HILL (SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

“**Y**ES, Will, that’s the place—where the grass grows greener and fresher. That’s where the beacon was lit.”

“And who lit it, grandfather?”

“Well, Will, as soon as we knew the Spaniards had been sighted, we who could sail went abroad. When night came our friends lit the beacon. Then, one by one, other places caught the news, and thus, by lighting these beacons, men flashed the news of the enemy’s presence all over the kingdom.”

“Would I had seen it, grandad!”

“Nay, my boy, you have your life before you. I have lived mine. It may be that you will see as great things, perhaps greater than I have.”

“Still, I should like to have lived then. Surely England was never so great before, and can never be so great again. I love to hear the story of the Armada; will you tell me all you know once again?”

“Well, Will, I think I love to tell it as much as you love to hear it. As I look back on that year, I seem to find in those few months all the greatest and best of my life’s experience packed into the period of just a few days. Sit down here on this bank, boy, and I will go over the incidents once more. I was working down in my yard by the creek on the afternoon of 19th July 1588. The work I loved, for it was the building of ships; but I was somewhat sad at heart, for Marjory, your grandmother, and for fifty years now my wife, was then a lovely girl, and had won my heart strangely. Still, for all I could



MARJORY SENDS HER LOVER TO FIGHT THE SPANIARDS

do to please her, there seemed little inclination on her side to do so much as even to nod to me in the street, and, because I had been so coldly treated, I was giving vent to my disappointment by hammering in the nails somewhat more vigorously than usual. All at once a shadow passed over my work, and I paused."

"And you saw—what, grandfather?"

"Ah! rascal, you remember that part of the story. Yes, I saw Marjory standing there, and I tell you, Will, I fell a-trembling like a reed in a wind."

"You are trembling now, grandfather!"

"Ah! yes, Will! Alas! that's only old age. It shakes the body sadly, but then I was young and lusty. It was love, lad, shook me then."

"I thought it was Marjory, my grandmother?"

"Yes, sure, it was afterwards. She said she had spoken to me three times, and I had refused to hear her. When I did look at her she said I gazed like a moon-calf, and to restore me to wisdom she shook me, placing both her hands upon my shoulders to do so. Ha! ha! and I dropped my hammer—but it didn't drop on her feet. No, Will, it fell on the ground right enough."

"What did she say?"

"Ah! I must keep to the story, I see! Well, she said, 'George Bennett, if you've got the manhood of an Englishman, you will get to sea at once. The Spaniards are here!'

"'The Spaniards?' said I. 'Where?'

"'There!' she cried, pointing seaward. 'Captain Thomas Fleming came into Plymouth to-day about four o'clock in the afternoon. His pinnace met the fleet, and, escaping, brought the news to the Lord High Admiral.'

'Meanwhile, Will, while she was talking I was gathering my wits together, and putting on my coat. 'Good-bye, Marjory,' I said.

"'Nay, Will,' quoth she. 'Before you go I would fain say this: If you beat the Spaniard, perhaps, when you return I . . .' She paused, Will, just like that. I waited, my heart beating as hard as my hammer had been doing.

“ ‘ Perhaps . . . what ? ’ I said.

“ ‘ Oh ! just go to sea and think it over,’ said she, and before I could even touch her she was gone.

“ As I left the yard Master Harvey came in haste towards me, crying, ‘ Come along, George ; they’re here ! ’

“ ‘ What ship are we to man ? ’ I inquired.

“ ‘ The *Crane*,’ he replied ; and so we hastened down to the creek. We were soon aboard. There were thirty of us in all, and, as we cast loose, a ringing cheer arose from the people on the shore. Among the others I caught sight of Marjory, who was waving her hand to some one on deck. I wondered who the man could be . . . !

“ We joined the Lord High Admiral, and lay just right in the road, some six ships in all. In the morning other ships came out of the haven, and about high noon, on the 20th July, we spied the Spanish Fleet, which was sailing before a south-west wind up the Channel, leaving Plymouth and our small fleet—a grievous mistake ; for we were so few that, had they turned, we should have suffered greatly. As it was we fell in and followed them, being joined every now and again by other ships that put out from every port and haven along our coast. It seems that they had had strict directions, and their commanders dared not disobey. Their orders were to anchor near Calais ; then, with the army on board, to land their soldiers on the Downs. It may be that they wished to enter the Thames, for London was but weakly fortified, and very rich ; but, whatever their scheme was, it proved of no avail. As we sailed along by night, every headland of the coast had its twinkling points of light—the beacons were burning ; one knew that England was awake. By the 21st we drew within musket shot, and Lord Charles Howard valiantly discharged his ordnance upon the Spanish vice-admiral. Our ships then nimbly ran to and fro, firing, threatening, harassing that lumbering half-moon formation of clumsy vessels, till we were herding them forward as a shepherd dog chases after a flock of panting sheep. So their great galleasses were furiously battered and shot, while our light and low vessels, answer-

ing speedily to helm and wind, passed in and out at pleasure, Will, till we felt confidence that the day was ours. I mind how the principal galleon of Seville, badly handled, fell foul of another ship, and we cheered lustily as her foremast fell crashing to the deck. Our little *Crane* had its beak in the wreckage before half an hour was gone. Then on we went full sail after the main fleet, leaving others to take the crew prisoners. We sailed near the Lord Admiral, who was dogging the Spanish lanterns, and in the morning we found we were alone amidst the enemy. Yet they could do nothing. We attacked and fired on them, passing safely through their midst. That day, the 22nd of July, Sir Francis Drake espied Valdez, and sent his pinnace to order surrender. They wished to make terms; but Drake said he had no time to make long parley. Let him yield himself forthwith. Then came Valdez and forty to fifty grandees, and humbly kissed Drake's hand. Drake embraced him, and lodged him honourably in his own cabin. In his ship were 55,000 ducats of the Spanish king's gold, which the crew merrily shared among them.

"Then their greatest, or one of their greatest, ships caught fire, and burned till the upper deck was burnt, and all aboard except a few were destroyed. Howbeit the gunpowder remained whole and unconsumed. So the ship passed into English hands. Meanwhile Lord Howard in his *Ark Royal* pursued and badgered the fleet, now flying in haste, till upon Tuesday, 23rd July, we were over against Portland, and the wind turned northerly and our foes had the vantage. Even then we beat them by our nimbleness, so they gathered themselves into a roundel, and sought thus to protect themselves, till, reaching Dunkirk, they might join forces with the Duke of Parma. Then came the most furious and bloody skirmish of all, for we were fighting for life and limb, wife and sweetheart, parent and child, and knew the evil in the Spaniard's heart. Our fleet, too, was ever increasing. Ships flocked forth to gain deathless fame and glory, and still by night the beacons blazed and told us of England's watch and ward. So it came to pass that we had some

100 ships, or 130, by the time we reached Dover, mostly small, yet too nimble for the Spaniard.

“The 24th was calm, and the fighting fell off somewhat. That same day our fleet was divided into four parts under the Lord Admiral, Sir Francis Drake, Captain Hawkins, and Captain Frobisher. The Spaniards, too, re-ordered their fleet, sailing three, five, and even more ships abreast, and thus we passed the Isle of Wight, off which the Lord Admiral gallantly encountered the Spaniards, and a terrible conflict ensued. Yet again the Spaniards hoisted sail, and made a roundel, while our English ships passed in and out with light hearts and cheerful courage, harassing the galleons. So the fight passed once, and once only, up the Channel. Never did they turn; but fled before us. Now upon Tuesday, the 30th July, about high noon, the foe came off Dunkirk; neither durst the fleet there come forth to help, because of thirty-five warlike ships of Holland and Zealand, which kept watch and ward under Admiral Justin of Nassau, with cunning mariners and trained soldiers, among whom were included two musketeers—all experienced men.

“So the ships of Holland and Zealand headed off our foes, and we followed closely behind the stricken fleet. Now, while the Spanish Fleet rode at anchor off Calais, wondering what to do in their bewildered state, our Lord High Admiral took eight of his worst ships, filled them with gunpowder, pitch, brimstone and other combustible stuff, and charging all their ordnance with powder, bullets, and stones, he sent the said ships, upon the 28th of July, being Sunday, about two of the clock after midnight, with the wind and tide, against the Spanish Fleet. Lord! the confusion, perplexity, and horror that arose among the foe, so that cutting their cables whereto their anchors were fastened, and hoisting sail, they betook themselves confusedly into the main sea, falling foul, ship upon ship; four of their powerful galleasses being cast upon a shoal off Calais. Aye, lad, ’twas a glorious time. There we fell short of gunpowder, but we gained treasure and fame, and never lost sight of the enemy, till they fled in haste before the wrath of the Lord.

Many of our ships went to Harwich; for the tempest that arose was mighty, and we were sadly tossed up and down. The Spaniards had no port; you remember how they pressed to the north, to the rock-bound Scottish coasts, and suffered at the hands of the wild Scottish and Irish people. Of their 91 great galleons they lost 58, and 33 reached home battered; of the pataches and zabras, 17 foundered, 18 reached home. They lost in all 81 ships, galleasses, galleons, galleys, and other vessels great and small. Of 30,000 souls the greater number perished; others reached home but to die of the toils and wounds they had endured."

"What happened when you reached home, grandfather?"

"Eh! lad, that was the strangest thing of all! Sure enough as I stepped ashore, up came maid Marjory, put her arms round me and kissed me, and so I married her, and she became your grandmother in course of time. Ay, 'twas a great victory!"

"What, grandfather, your wedding was a victory?"

"No, no, lad. I mean the victory over the Spaniards. The whole nation was released from a nightmare that had afflicted it for years—ever since Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries. We struck a coin bearing the words 'God breathed upon men, and they were scattered.' The Zealanders, on their commemorative coin, said, 'Glory to God alone,' and 'The Spanish Fleet. It came, went, and was.' I liked our expression better, for that great tempest seemed the Lord Almighty's deliverance for the English people.

"Now, boy, we must go; or Dame Marjory will scold us for being late for dinner."

XXVI

THE ENGLISH IN VIRGINIA (1606)

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH sat at the tiller of a two-ton barge, which was sailing idly across the northern end of the great inlet, now known as the Chesapeake.

It was above six weeks since they had left their comrades near Cape Charles, some two hundred miles to south at the entrance of the inlet. During this time they had fared very hard, living for the most part on oatmeal and water, with the addition of roots, and of such game or fish as they could catch.

Of the dozen men aboard, only three were sailors, one was an Indian interpreter, the rest were gentlemen-adventurers, of good heart but of little skill in the management of a boat.

The day was sultry and windless. To the east the sun beat white on the silvery sheet of the vast inlet; westwards, some two miles distant, lay a shore of bleached sand, backed by wooded hills.

"A good land, messmates," said Francis Carew; "but give me Elizabeth Island!"

"Why, fared you so well there?" asked a Plymouth lad, lying in the shadow of the mainsail.

"Truly we did!" said Carew. "I would I had bided there, as some half score of us were minded to do."

"A rare island, fifteen or sixteen miles about, girdled with fair creeks, and comely beaches, on which was an abundance of shell-fish, and tortoises without number. Lobsters too, and crabs, and fish, so plentiful that our nets, like the apostle Peter's, were filled nigh to breaking. Oh! the noble woods thereof, cedar, oak and all manner of

goodly trees; walnut and wild cherries, whereon were clusters of fruit fifty in a bunch. And everywhere ground nuts, large as potatoes, but two inches deep under the soil, which was, indeed, so fruitful that the barley, oats, wheat, and pease we sowed therein grew apace. You must know, too, that nigh the middle of the island was a lake of sweet water, and in it an islet of one acre, well grown with wood, on which we built a house and a palisade about it. Here presently in canoes, the naturals came to us fifty strong. With them we bartered knives, hatchets, beads, and other toys, for choice furs. These same naturals were decked with ornaments of copper, which metal they told us they dug out of the earth on the main. Never have I encountered naturals so well conditioned and well proportioned, but they were beardless, and I call to mind how, for this reason, they were stricken with admiration for some of us who had great beards, notably George Lane, a prodigiously hairy man. In their simplicity they thought these beards to be counterfeits, such as some of them wore, and would have bartered handsomely for them. Kindly men they were, and unlike the crew we encountered after we came to Pentecost Harbour, who laid an ambuscade for us with some fifteen-score bowmen, which ambuscade Owen Griffin discovered for our salvation. Now the land hereabout is well enough, but marvellous lonely, nor have we yet lighted on any of the wonders related by Sir Richard Grenville's men, namely, of towns built of wood and fenced with palisades, wherein their kings dwell, and have feasting-houses, in which are idols; neither have we seen, as they did who ventured up Roanoke, any that fish for pearls, which they find in such abundance, though mostly of a black kind, that their beds and houses are trimmed with them, so that they make little account of the same, and will grant good barter. There, too, I have heard the naturals have copper in plenty, which they find in the falls of a great river, catching it in bowls and using it in great sheets to deck their houses. But see you how Master John Smith is heading for the shore! Why do ye so, good captain?"

"Why, for my map's sake, friend Carew, and to find

us meat. Get you your weapons ready, my hearts, that you may find us food while I labour at my chart."

The barge grounded on a beach of white sand that stretched up to dense woods. They beached the craft and made fast. A fire was lit, and a sentry posted. Here the party spent the day in search of food. By the evening a buck, sundry wild fowl, and a sack of ground nuts were brought aboard. That night they slept on the barge for safety, because, though they had seen no natives, Captain Smith had found traces of them in the woods. They were not disturbed, however, and, at dawn, launched the barge, and were about to cast off when they heard loud cries.

A party of natives, some forty strong, came out of the woods on to the beach and advanced to the edge of the water. They bore bows and arrows, but did not level them, and made friendly signs. At the same time, round the point to north, shot two large dug-out canoes, manned by half a score paddlers a-piece, and moving with unbelievable speed across the gleaming waters.

Captain Smith, axe in hand by the anchor cable, bade the rowers lie on their oars, while the others primed their pistols and muskets ready to fire. He then hastily called the Indian interpreter forward to parley with the new-comers.

These, it seemed, were well disposed, and proffered skins, weapons, and curiously carved tobacco-pipes.

The strangers were Sasquesahanocks, of a tribe six hundred warriors strong, and lived in palisaded towns.

But what amazed the English, when they at last ventured on land among them, was the height and bulk of the strangers. So huge were they, that the English were as children by their side. These giants were clothed in the skins of bears and wolves. Their weapons, proportioned to their size, were bows and arrows, and clubs skilfully carved. Their voices, as befitted the great chests of the speakers, were singularly deep and strong.

In exchange for their gifts, Captain Smith presented them with knives, beads, and bells. He also showed them mirrors, clocks, and various instruments, and fixing

a lath in the sand splintered it with a pistol shot, to the wonder and delight of the Sasquesahanocks. He then proposed to some of them that they should sail in the barge across the bay.

Five of the chiefs accepted the invitation; among these was the tallest of the party, the hugest and most powerfully built man the English had ever set eyes on in all their travels.

So they cast off, and proceeded under oar and sail before a brisk wind, accompanied by the two canoes. Each of these was fashioned out of a single log, hollowed out with fire and with sharp stones, and, though they were full forty feet long, the paddlers in them easily outpaced the best speed of the barge.

When they came to the farther shore, the chiefs landed, and departed with many offers of friendship.

The barge, now heading southward, beat down the great inlet, casting anchor at night in a creek between wooded hills.

Captain Smith volunteered for the first watch. He had, indeed, little inclination for sleep, and sat in the high poop, looking with a strange lustre in his eyes across the great waters that stretched star-lit to west.

Out of the vast, unknown land, light sounds broke the stillness. Birds cried, animals barked in the silent woods, wild fowl jangled across the glancing waters. A noble country indeed, and who knew what lay in the vast territories inland, on which England, France, and Spain had already set eager eyes?

And John Smith, sitting sleepless, for the hundredth time dedicated himself to the task of winning that great region for England, vowing that, by God's grace, he would never take his ease, till he had secured for his country the mastery over that unknown world.

XXVII

INIGO JONES (1650)

ON a fine morning in May, 1650, an old man was crossing St. Paul's Churchyard.

He wore a crimson silk skull cap, and a suit of russet cloth much discoloured, according well with his faded long hair and grey, peaked beard; a shabby figure, on which some of the passers-by looked with contempt.

The fine eyes and sensitive mouth should have taught them better, for they had before them one of the loftiest artistic geniuses that England has produced; one of the great architects of the world; the man who gave to his fellow-countrymen a new sense of beauty in building.

Before him rose the huge bulk of old St. Paul's, over the vast central tower of which the spring clouds drifted in luminous scrolls across the blue. The churchyard was strewn with masses of stone, brick, and masonry, from the buildings which he himself had cleared away years before, when he had been entrusted with the work of repairing the old cathedral, and of clearing a space around it. He had pulled down a number of old structures, which had grown like fungi about it, and among them an old church. For so doing Parliament had fined him £500—completing his ruin.

He was thinking of these things as he passed under the splendid western porch, under which tradesmen had lately been allowed to put up their stalls. Within, the vast, ancient interior was falling into decay. A party of soldiers was noisily playing at bowls in one of the side-aisles; in the lofty choir a number of horses were stabled. Most of the rare stained glass that had adorned the

windows was broken, and the spring sunshine shone white and fresh on the filth of the horse-litter below.

The old man paused for a while, under the tall, graceful arches that supported the central tower; then he left the building by the south transept and sat down on a stone in the clear sunlight.

Two tradesmen, passing, recognized him, scowled, and sneered. Doubtless they were some of those whose houses he had pulled down years ago, in order to clear a space round the cathedral.

Inigo Jones thought bitterly of those past times, when a glorious career seemed to open before him.

That morning he had taken a long walk to visit some of his favourite creations. Too poor to afford a boat to Westminster stairs, he had gone on foot to Whitehall, where he had stood a full half-hour before the stately Banqueting Hall. Of the whole splendid palace which he had designed for King James, this was the only portion he had been permitted to build. Out of one of the windows of the first floor—so strange are the humours of Fate—his royal master and patron, King Charles I, had stepped on to the scaffold outside on that bleak January morning, little more than one year ago. He thought kindly of Charles Stuart, for, with all his faults, that Prince had been a patron of artists. Inigo Jones remembered without rancour the money which he had lent the King in his distress, and which would now never be repaid.

Thence the old man had walked to Northumberland House, by Charing Cross, to consider the fine portico with which he had tried to break the monotony of the great, gloomy, brick façade. Next he had gone down to the river-side and refreshed himself with the sight of the lovely water-gate, that he had built with some of the stone of Old Paul's, for the palace erected by the Duke of Buckingham on the site of old York House. He had wearily ascended the lanes that led from the river to Covent Garden, where stood St. Paul's Church, "the finest barn in England," as he remembered he had called it. The Earl of Bedford had not been liberal, yet he, Inigo Jones, had contrived a noble building, with a

portico that was the admiration of all. Thence, by way of Lincoln's Inn, where stood the Gothic chapel he had, against his inclination, built to suit the surroundings; and with a glance at the two fine brick pillars—there was genius in their design—he had come on hither, worn out, with hardly enough money in his pocket to pay for a meal at an ordinary.

As he sat thinking, he noted a quaint figure—one of the Jewish merchants, newly come over from Holland—bargaining at a shop opposite. He drew out a notebook and sketched the outlandish figure, but soon desisted. He was too dispirited; his art was failing him, even as everything else had failed him.

Once again he reviewed his long life. Oh, the joyous days of his apprenticeship to the carpenter in Paul's Yard! He had been happy then, practising woodwork, metalwork, painting, building, glazing; and had at the same time acquired no slight knowledge of the goldsmith's art, of upholstery, and of decoration—a knowledge that had afterwards been of great service to him. He recollected with pride that no craftsman had ever been able to put him off with inferior work.

Then had come a notable day, when a great nobleman, admiring his skill, had sent him to Italy. Perhaps life had never been so full and joyous for him as in that brilliant country, where he had passed from coloured city to coloured city, all different, and in which some choice masterpiece of art surprised one at every corner.

There, fired by the works of that excellent master, Palladio, he had conceived the idea of a new architecture, which should be the glory of England and astonish the world. He had studied and dreamt to such good purpose that King Christian IV of Denmark had invited him to come to his kingdom, where he had built noble buildings worthy of any artist.

Afterwards, when the Dane had visited James VI of England, his son-in-law, he had accompanied Christian to London. Here he had been disappointed, for James had employed him—him, a great artist—merely in preparing masques as an assistant to Ben Jonson.

One would not willingly think ill of the dead, but the quarrel with the famous poet still rankled. Surely it had been ungenerous of Jonson to omit his fellow-artist's name from the printed book of masques. The poet had moreover lashed him with unholy skill in satires to which he, Inigo Jones, had been able to make but a feeble rejoinder, being no match for the other with the quill.

Prince Henry had indeed favoured him, and had appointed him as surveyor of his works. Would to heaven that gallant youth had not died, else there might have been no Revolution and matters might have turned out very differently! True, Prince Charles had been a good friend to him, and had encouraged him with the promise of the post of Surveyor-General of Works. To qualify himself yet better for this office he had again visited Italy, and had prepared plans for a vast palace, none statelier in the world, 1280 feet by 950, containing a great circular court and statues innumerable. When he had returned, he had, it is true, secured the post of Surveyor-General of Works, but only on condition that he should receive no pay till the post was clear of debt. He had, nevertheless, accepted the office, and remembered with a thin smile that, when the debt was extinguished, he had been allowed but eighty pounds a year salary, eight shillings a day for entertainment, a gown of broadcloth, a budge fur for the gown, and green baize to line it—the gown to be renewed every All Saints' Day.

Yet he had given of his best, endeavouring to persuade the King to carry out the plans for the palace, only to be refused on the plea of want of funds. However, he had at last been permitted to erect the Banqueting Hall. In the meanwhile he had supported himself by erecting, or altering, houses for the nobles, such houses as that at Wilton, for the Earl of Pembroke; or by beautifying the mansions of worthless favourites like the Duke of Buckingham, whose extravagance had squandered the royal money and prevented the erection of the great palace at Whitehall.

So the years had crept by; James had been succeeded by Charles, a prince filled with enthusiasm for Art, but

always lacking money and, year by year, more involved with his Parliament in struggles that had ended in the Civil Wars and in the King's execution. Since then, all hope was gone. He was now seventy-eight years of age and utterly destitute. Even the small sum which he had concealed in his garden had been betrayed by a servant to the authorities, and had been taken from him. As a Catholic he was in ill-repute with the Parliament. It was much that he was suffered to occupy humble lodgings in Somerset House.

The old man sighed, rose wearily, and walked to an ordinary in Cheapside to strengthen himself for the walk home.

XXVIII

PARLIAMENT JOAN (1655)

WE must recollect that, for the most part, history tells us about the lives of persons of high rank; the ordinary man and woman leading an ordinary life has escaped the notice of scribe and chronicler who has had his eyes closely fixed upon emperors and popes, kings and bishops. So that wherever there emerges from the past just a plain man or woman, a simple unattended traveller along life's road, dusty, tired, hungry, or thirsty like ourselves, we welcome the visitor and ask for news about ordinary people in olden times.

Such figures are rare in the pages of history, but fortunately we can for a little while see one very, very clearly in the middle of the seventeenth century. We catch a few clear glimpses here and there, just enough to make us call her a Florence Nightingale of Cromwell's time, and then she dies and we know no more. So now for a few minutes you are going to gather the true story, as far as it can be told, of a noble woman whose name ought to be enshrined in the heart of every patriotic Englishman, as that of one who laid down her life for her friends. Her real name was Elizabeth Alkin, but the nickname is by no means a modern device, and the soldiers called her Parliament Joan.

You will recollect the stormy nature of Cromwell's age, how King and Parliament were at loggerheads and how civil war broke out. And then, after the establishment of the Republic, England was at war with the Dutch. Cromwell and his Council of State developed a very powerful fleet and resolved to make our naval power supreme—and they succeeded in doing so, for the Dutch

were defeated completely. You have read, perhaps, of those days and their strife, just as you have read of other battles ; but have you ever stopped to think that in those bygone days men suffered cruel pain from wounds, for little could be done to relieve their agony ? In the days of Joan there were even in London only a very few hospitals, and these were of the most unsatisfactory kind, yet people actually complained about the upkeep of such places. Outside London, if a badly wounded man were looked after by kind-hearted people, he was fortunate, for otherwise there was no provision for him. Yet in Joan's days there were grim and bloody battles, for the English, Scots, and Dutch were all resolute, stubborn people who would not yield easily. There was very little money at that time, and it cost as much as we could afford to keep up the army and navy—who, then, would trouble to look after the cargoes of wounded and dying as they reached our shores after some terrible encounter on the sea ? In the eastern counties, ordinary people grumbled because after such battles the poor victims were brought by their fellows to the towns and villages and billeted with any chance householder to receive shelter and care. People said they could not afford to keep these battered and shattered fellow-creatures. No doubt many folk were filled with pity, but there was no organization. Joan tried to supply the need.

She had earned her name during the Civil Wars possibly by ministering to the wounded Roundheads, but her sympathy was not narrow, for among her patients was a sick Jesuit priest, "a prisoner in Newgate," and her appeals obtained for him a liberty for three months. However, when the naval conflict began, Joan evidently desired to place her services at the service of the maimed, for she begged that, as she had risked her life day and night during the Civil Wars and had faithfully served the State, she might now be sent to tend the "maimed and wounded seamen at Dover." The authorities, however, sent her to Harwich, where she was placed under the protection of Major Bourne; and in that town she awaited the arrival of those poor human wrecks who came out of



PARLIAMENT JOAN AT HARWICH

battle. How pathetic must have been her life during those weary months! One supposes that she enlisted the sympathy of generous people, but the State could do little for her. She spent her own slender stock of money to meet the terrible needs of the sick and dying. When she arrived at Harwich, she was granted the sum of £5; the mayor of the town gave her 20/; Major Bourne managed to make her a grant of £10; but that was all she could obtain—a sum of £16 to meet great expenses incurred in ministering to that sad human misery! How she must have suffered when she saw sick men dying just for want of ordinary necessities! And, to make matters more difficult for her, it was not merely her own countrymen whom she tended. She included our enemies in her sympathy. These are her own words: “Seeing their wants and misery were so great, I could not but have pity on them although our enemies.” In June 1654 she wrote to say that she had spent three times the amount paid her as her salary, “for I cannot see them want, although I owe money for my own food.” We know also that she gave liberally “to have their bodies washed and their clothes mended.”

One cannot fully picture that scene of beggary and wretchedness. How poor Joan would have opened her eyes if she could have looked into one of our splendid modern hospitals, with all its equipment and provision for the sick and wounded, its magnificent staff of doctors and nurses, its spacious rooms and clean white beds. But she knew nothing of such things. All she could do was just her simple duty—one solitary striving figure in the midst of a sea of agony and woe. A true woman’s heart is very brave and constant; but there is a limit to human efforts. The wealth and sympathy of the nation are nowadays directed to meet the needs of our soldiers and sailors, but, as we go back in history, it is far different. At last we see poor Joan, a widow and very desolate, returning to London herself in bitter distress. All she had in personal possessions was the sum of 3/, and after having toiled for others she herself was stricken and dying for lack of proper food and nursing. She wrote a pitiful letter to

the Council of State asking for help. "I have sold my bed and other goods and have nothing for my support." So she begged admission to a hospital. Her constant toil had brought on many infirmities, and all she asked was to die in peace.

We revere the name of Florence Nightingale and we sometimes think of her as a pioneer in woman's work of nursing. It is right that we should honour her and rank her among the noblest women of our race. Still, here was a woman, as far as we can judge, equally noble, and living two hundred years before Miss Nightingale, who tried to serve in the same self-denying manner the wounded soldiers and sailors of her generation. It is only fitting that we should honour her name. That she is not better known is simply due to the fact that in her time there was not the same regard as in modern days for the services of those who nobly lay down their lives for their country.

History, which is liberal with information concerning great soldiers, statesmen, bookmen, artists, kings, queens, and princes, is wonderfully silent with regard to the lives of the poor. As we think of Cromwell's age, certain great names come to our minds, well-known faces rise before us, and we associate them with the events of those days. Now among these great personages we can think of this frail, noble woman, Elizabeth Alkin, who was content to suffer and die. Surely as we read of her deeds we must admit that her presence softens those rugged scenes with a gentle feminine grace, and presents to us a picture of true womanhood employed in its noblest calling.

XXIX

THE DUTCH FLEET IN THE THAMES (1667)

MASTER William Ensor and his niece Cicely sat on a hill above Chatham one warm summer afternoon. Below them wound the broad gleaming river, by which on the left rose the massive tower of Rochester Cathedral, the square, grey castle, and the dockyards, where on the stocks stood two ships of raw timber with huge carved poop castles. On the right, between grassy hills, the Medway, inset with islands, wound blue and shining to the sea. Close to the bank, several charred hulls of men-of-war rose gloomily out of the water.

"A sad end for a good ship, uncle!" said Cicely, pointing to the wrecks. "I mind the time last year when we supped aboard that same *Royal Oak*."

"To me, a ship's carpenter, a more cruel sight. Good ships they were, and with these eyes I saw them burn. I would I had not lived to behold it. You in London Town know but little of the peril and shame England hath endured. See you the jack at the poop-staff of one of them? A marvel it is it hath the heart to flutter. I call those days to mind all too plainly.

"It was at the beginning of June we had news that the Dutch with eighty sail and twenty fire-ships were come to Harwich, and that a French fleet was bearing up Channel. That same evening we heard the report of guns borne on the wind."

"Which we also heard," said the girl. "It was at Bednall Green in the garden of Mrs. Batten, and an ill sound it was."

"Judge how we felt, niece, when, on the day following,

they at Sheerness saw the enemy in the Nore—great ships, fire-ships, and sloops, fitted with sail and oars. They drew inshore and assaulted the town, which they took in less than three hours. Oh! the confusion that prevailed both here and in London, where the ministers at Whitehall sent us many messengers, but small help; being, it is said, intent on filling out fire-ships, and in mad plans, such as gathering all the western barges, with which, if need were, to build a bridge above the Hope for the passage of horse.”

“You say truly, uncle, for in London there was wild running hither and thither, and much drumming about the streets to assemble the City Militia. I saw a great muster on Tower Hill, where the King addressed them and told them he would not ask them to face any danger that he would not share. Moreover, all the people were for crowding to the banks and calling for their money.”

“Of that we heard, and how ships were being sunk at Barking Creek to bar the river. But they would send us no ammunition, the Lieutenant of the Tower saying he had only enough for himself. However, a great chain, each link six inches round about, and a boom, were laid on stages across the Medway, and the ships drawn up behind them, yet not far enough, as the event showed, for which I rejoice to hear Commissioner Pett hath been sent to the Tower. The Dutch coming up-stream, on a great tide, full sail before the strong easterly wind, which hath helped them mightily throughout, broke through the chain, two of the ships that were set to guard it withdrawing faintheartedly; all this in despite of the fire of *Upnor Castle* and of the Yard batteries. But, Lord! to see such bad shooting, most of the balls grazing the water, and the batteries soon desisting, either through cowardice or because their powder was spent. The enemy thereupon set on his fire-ships, and burnt several of our vessels, notably the *Royal James*, the *London*, the *Royal Oak*, and capturing the *Royal Charter*, which the crew had forsaken. From this same height, I saw a Dutch boat with no more than nine men, so they say,

board the ship and strike the flag and jack, a trumpeter playing mockingly the while. They cut the cable, and took the vessel off, very skilfully, for the tide having fallen, so that there was not enough water to ride on an even keel, they heeled the great vessel over, and so floated off their prize. Not, however, without loss to themselves, for three of their ships ran aground, and, being unable to get them off, they burned them. And, mark you, that same evening, my lass, the King was lightheartedly chasing moths at a dance in his palace of Whitehall. Neither did our shame end there; but many English seamen joined the Dutch for pay, and of these wretches some were seen on board the enemy glorying in their treason, and calling to our fellows that, whereas they did heretofore fight for tickets, they did now fight for dollars. In the same craven spirit many of the seamen that remained, and likewise the workmen, refused to fight or labour, if they received not an advance of wages, some of the workmen demanding three shillings for a day's wage, which the Government must perforce grant them."

"Indeed, I believe you, uncle," said Cicely, "for in Wapping the seamen's wives cried out the same publicly, and a great crowd assembled in London before the Lord Chancellor's house, cut down his trees, broke his windows, and placed gibbets on either side his door, shouting that in the Exchequer was money enough to break down the floor, yet none was to be spared for the defence of the kingdom; also that they had been sold to the enemy, and that the seamen were starved while the King and Court made merry."

"Let the Lord judge the guilty, niece. Surely He aided us, for the Dutch, very strangely, did not attempt the river, but fell on Gillingham; in which matter they bore themselves civilly, murdering none, nor burning or destroying aught that they could not remove; whereas the King's soldiers, under Lord Douglas, plundered and ravaged shamefully after them. Nor were the seamen better, for, among other things, they fell on, and pillaged the boats that conveyed money from London to the dock-yards.

“God keep us from again seeing such confusion. Here at Deptford nothing was ready; indeed, this nation that lives by the sea and hath heretofore been powerful in the water, had neither ships nor dockyards worthy of so great a people. So neglected had the navy been, that at Deptford, some short time since, when they went to clean an old dock, they found therein a great ship of Queen Bess her time, decaying in the slime, with a huge provision of stone cannon-balls yet aboard. The people at Whitehall seemed mad with fear, intent on saving models of ships, while they suffered the enemy to capture the men-of-war themselves, and in their haste sinking vessels with their cargo to bar the river, on one of which ships, I was told, were goods valued at £80,000, all of which perished miserably.

“We were in sore straits, and moreover much discomposed by horrid rumours, hearing, among other things, that Tom of the Wood, the hermit of Woolwich who had foretold the Great Fire, prophesied worse evils. Nevertheless, by the exertions of some honest men, such as Mr. Pepys of Whitehall, things mended. The batteries were repaired, guns, powder, and shot were provided, ships found in ordnance and crews, merchant vessels seized and fitted out as men-of-war.

“On the 23rd of July the Dutch again beat up the Hope with some forty sail and fire-ships before the east wind, which greatly hindered our vessels. Sundry fights took place, in which neither side had the advantage, our ships being commanded by all manner of idle fellows, having little skill in seamanship, yet were the Government compelled to employ such as presented themselves. For which reason they effected little, and small wonder, seeing that, in the late encounter, Captains Jordan and Spragg knew not where the squadron of the other was.

“The Dutch, indeed, showed great skill, and have, it would appear, a better knowledge of our waters than we, retreating on occasion through the channels in a very masterly manner. They set great store on the lives of their men, providing many boats to rescue the crews of vessels in distress, whereas we make no such provision,

thus disheartening our men. Also, our fire-ships are too slow a-burning, thus they can be fended off and sent down the tide, to the peril of our craft. Neither is there much spirit among our seamen, some of whom, the other day, deserted their ship, first setting it a-fire, which some Faversham fishers observing, they boarded the vessel, extinguished the flames, and took the craft back to Faversham.

“For this reason, I cannot chide those, and they are many, who revile the King and call to mind the usurper Oliver, in whose time the Dutch not only dared not venture to attack us, but were often grievously handled. And now, they do say we will make peace with these same Dutch on shameful terms, which Heaven forbid! Come, lass, it groweth late. We will go down to the river, and you shall look on the wrecks yonder, that, if you should have children, you may relate what you have seen, as a warning of the disgrace and peril to which folly can bring a nation.”

X X X

FROST FAIR (1684)

ON the morning of January 31st, 1684, Master Thomas Fuller lay snugly abed in one of the back rooms of a house in Fleet Street belonging to his uncle, Mr. John Southey, bookseller. The boy was in no humour to rise, for the windows of the casement, which looked out upon the garden at the back, were damasked with white frost flowers, and the water in the jug and basin frozen hard. Master Thomas had come to London from Wiltshire a few weeks before, to become a scholar at Charterhouse in the city, but his uncle had learned that the pupils at the school were suffering bitterly from the cold, and he had delayed entering his nephew—a circumstance which greatly pleased Master Thomas, who had spent his time very pleasantly at the great fair on the frozen river near by.

He remembered his first days in London town, when, after a tedious journey in the lumbering coach, he had found himself wrapped in a russet fog, begotten, so his uncle told him, by the use of sea-coal, a new-fangled fuel very foul, that had taken the place of wholesome wood logs. So thick had the fog been, like the plague of darkness with which Moses vexed the froward Egyptians, that one could not see across Fleet Street at noon, and that, at twilight, passengers must needs find their way by means of linkboys who bore blazing torches.

So bitter, too, had been the cold, that pumps and conduits were frozen hard, and water could only be had by thawing the icicles or the ice of the river. They, however, had been more fortunate, as Master Southey knew the owner of the Roman bath in the Strand, whence Sam, the apprentice, daily fetched water in buckets.

Tom was not allowed to linger in bed, for his aunt

Elizabeth roused him from its snugness, and he hastily dressed himself, thawing his numb hands in the warm water she had kindly brought him to wash himself withal.

In the sitting-room at the back of the shop he found a blazing wood fire, and sat down to a breakfast of cold beef, bread and butter, conserves, and a dish of hot coffee. He did not dally over the meal, for his cousin Nell, a girl of twelve, was eager to be off to the fair.

Warmly clothed, their skates swung over their shoulders, the children hastened down a lane to the river. They reached a water-gate near the Temple. Here they halted to look on the strange, brawling scene.

Before them, under a bleak sky, lay the river, like a wide street or piazza, swept by a brisk wind. Near the water-gate, locked in the ice, were several barges and wherries. From the Temple to Southwark opposite, extended a wide avenue of booths, mostly built of canvas stretched over wooden frames. To right and left the ice swarmed with people, skating, sleighing, playing games, driving in coaches. The air rang with shouts and music; overhead, sea-gulls, driven inland by the cold, screamed and wheeled.

The children went cautiously down the ice-filmed stone steps, and passed between the booths down the avenue, which some wit had named Freezeland Street. Before the stalls, and within them, glowed braziers of blazing sea-coal.

At once they were beset by the stall-keepers, who noisily offered their wares to the throng of sight-seers.

There were toy-shops filled with models of sleighs, wooden animals, painted puppets representing skaters, bear-wards, merry-andrews, and punchinellos; booths where one could purchase or hire sleighs and skates of every kind; drinking tents crammed with half-drunken men and women carousing and trolling catches; stalls for the sale of steaming drinks, cakes, and sweetmeats, or gay with ribbons and painted crockery bearing legends in honour of King Frost; eating-shops innumerable, in which roast meats, fowls, geese, ducks, rabbits, turkeys, and puddings tempted the passer-by; stalls that steamed with pancakes, waffles, or hot codlins; booths where spangled clowns tumbled, conjurers performed marvels,

learned animals picked out letters as aptly as any scholar, and Egyptians told fortunes. There was also a lottery, enticing those who would wait on Fortune.

Pushing their way through the roaring crowd, the two children reached the Southwark side. Here clambering up the bank they surveyed the frozen river, a grey, glittering expanse, strewn with revellers and vehicles.

On the northern shore stood the water-gates and garden walls of great houses adjoining the stream. Beyond rose the brown roofs and pale towers of London, for the most part lately rebuilt; above which like a fortress loomed the immense white choir and the beautiful columned transept porticoes and piers of New Saint Paul, then in course of construction, and London Bridge, covered with quaint, tumble-down structures.

On their left, towards the south-west, across the fields and houses, and beyond a gleaming bend of river, they could see the roofs of Westminster and the grey mass of the Abbey, where kings lay under carved and painted tombs.

Some watermen, hindered in their trade by the ice, stood here with benches and chairs, offering skates for hire; but the children had no need of their services, and, buckling on their own skates, they glided up river where the crowd was not so dense.

Hand in hand they threaded their way among noisy groups of men, who were playing at football or skittles. Farther on stakes had been driven in the thick ice. To one of these was tethered a fierce bull, which sundry bulldogs and mastiffs were baiting, surrounded by crowds of cheering people, some of whom, by their appearance, should have chosen a worthier sport. Fastened to another stake by a chain attached to an iron belt about its body was a muzzled bear. Some hundred rough fellows in a ring were urging on fierce hounds to attack the poor torn beast, before whom two of the dogs lay bleeding and dead, ripped open by its terrible claws. Nearer the bank, on iron spits over a blazing fire, roasted the carcasses of an ox and of three sheep, around which, at tables, sat a noisy crowd, who were served with cuts from the hot meat and with great tankards of ale.



THE FROZEN RIVER FROM THE SOUTHERN BANK

Skaters flitted over the river, some on bones strapped beneath their shoes; hackney coaches plied between the north and south banks, sleighs innumerable flashed jingling by. After a while Tom and Nell returned to Freezeland Street, and sat down in one of the eating-booths to roast duck, hot codlins, cakes, and fragrant coffee.

Greatly refreshed they now sped eastwards, and came on the quaint spectacle of a wherry, raised on wheels, on which it moved before the wind with the aid of sails, and of a gang of men who, walking on the ice in front of it, drew the boat with a rope. On board was a company of revellers, drinking and playing on lutes.

A flourish of trumpets sounded, and the children saw a gay procession headed by soldiers proceed across the river from the northern bank. King Charles and his Queen, attended by the Duke of York and by many court ladies and gentlemen, went a leisurely round of Frost Fair, pausing before the different stalls, and notably before that of Master Croome, printer, who presented them with a memorial of their visit, printed there and then on the ice on a quarto sheet of Dutch paper; which memorials he afterwards sold to the bystanders.

The crowd was now becoming over-noisy, and the children thought it best to return home.

As they halted at the water-gate for a last glance at the frozen river, lamps, newly lit in the booths, strewed it with sparks of gold.

"Truly, cousin Nell," said Thomas, "I marvel so fierce and great a stream can ever freeze to stone, as we see it before us now!"

"A wonder it is," she replied; "but my father hath it that it is because of the straitness of the arches of London Bridge yonder, by which, in some sort, the speed of the stream is, as it were, broken and brought to stillness. Should it therefore happen that yonder bridge be ever removed, or the arches enlarged, the river will no more freeze. And now, coz, give me your hand, and let us run homewards briskly to thaw the ice in our blood and the numbness of our limbs."

XXXI

PETER THE GREAT IN LONDON (1698)

ONE fine afternoon, in the late summer of 1748, half a score of London merchants were seated in the broad bay window of a waterside inn at Greenwich, famous for its fish dinners. Through the window they had a noble view of the river and of the green flats of Essex. On the left glittered the long reach, a shining avenue of water, on which the sun, sinking behind the distant spires and smoke of London, set restless fire. Down Deptford reach, a heavily-built brig, bluff at the bows and high at the poop, was beating down-river, under shortened canvas, a strange flag flickering at the peak.

"A Muscovy ship," said Mr. Standish, a wool merchant, "and doubtless from the Greenland dock. Odd people those Muscovites, and little better than savages; but why do I presume to speak of them in the presence of our good friend Chudleigh? Which, friend Chudleigh, puts me in mind that it would pass the time agreeably for the present company if you would relate to us something concerning the famous Czar Peter, with whom I believe you had dealings many years ago, when he visited England."

"You speak truly in the latter respect, friend Standish, and, if the company so desires, I shall gladly endeavour to recall my meetings with that extraordinary man, though, alas, the fifty years that have passed since then have well-nigh dimmed my memory. Nor will I affect the modesty that desires pressing to enhance its performance. Indeed, to speak truth, the sight of yonder flag had already set my mind a-thinking of that same Czar Peter. You must know, then, if indeed you are ignorant

of the matter, that in 1696 I was apprenticed to Jonathan Drew, wine and spirit merchant. When the Muscovite arrived in London, in January 1698, he dealt with us for supplies of strong drinks, of which in truth he was inordinately fond.

“Now my mother being, as some of you know, of Dutch descent, I had grown up with a tolerable knowledge of that language, of which Czar Peter during his stay in Holland had to some degree become possessed. As he had no English, my acquaintance with the Dutch tongue won me his favour, and I was always sent to wait upon him, when he had dealings with us.

“I well remember our first meeting, in February 1698, at his lodgings in Norfolk Street, Strand.

“Picture to yourselves a dingy room, in which were crowded several beds, each occupied by one or more dirty fellows, some wallowing therein clothed; among these the Prince of Imeritia, a great noble of Muscovy, but sadly verminous. The air was intolerably stale, for every window was closed on account of the bitter frost, and moreover the place reeked with Hollands and brandy. In a corner was a table on which, without any decency of cloth, were heaped platters of food. One or two men were gnawing and gorging in so beastly a fashion as, please heaven, I shall not see again.

“The Czar himself rose from off a bed to speak to me; a monstrously huge man, blunt of feature, wearing a small moustachio and his hair cut short at the shoulder. He was half dressed in sailor’s knee-breeches below a frowsy, dirty shirt, and smelt very ill of spirits. When I addressed him he was much pleased that I knew Dutch, so that he could dispense with an interpreter. As he spoke, he was seized with a strange convulsion that contorted his face and frame horribly. I afterwards found that he was liable to fits of this disorder, which at first greatly discomposed me.

“He was indeed a strange and sinister prince, so coarse and savage that he loved to sup familiarly with common men in taverns, as, to my knowledge, he often did here in England, notably with Lord Carmarthen near Tower Hill, at the pothouse, now called the Czar of Muscovy in his

honour; a strange honour indeed not infrequently accorded to princes. Yet at times he could be not unkingly, and there was always somewhat in his eyes that dissuaded his most boon companion from making free with him, for when enraged his strength and brutish fury made him dangerous.

“I recollect how on one occasion in Norfolk Street one of his followers angered him. The Czar, seizing a heavy whip, belaboured the poor wretch heartily about the head and shoulders, till he brought him bleeding to the ground. Yet, when his frenzy had spent itself, this strange prince with a smile held out his hand, which the miserable slave thereupon kissed, kneeling with a passionate worship that touched me.

“I will further confess that I myself, in some sort, revered this huge, fierce savage, who though he was so great a king in his own country, yet for the prosperity thereof worked as a shipwright in foreign dockyards, both here and in Holland, and that in good earnest, as a common carpenter, putting himself civilly under the direction of overseers, eating and drinking with his fellows, and acquiring no little skill at the trade.

“I saw him frequently at York House also, whereto he moved from Norfolk Street.

“Here one day, being at table about eleven of the clock, as was his custom (for he dined daily about that time and supped at seven), I found him so angered by a crowd of people, who looked in upon him through the windows, and even endeavoured in an unmannerly fashion to force their way into the house, that he left the room in a fury.

“Partly on account of this, and for convenience, he soon after removed to Sayes Court, a noble mansion at Deptford, the property of Mr. John Evelyn, but at that time rented by Admiral Benbow. Here the Czar was the guest of King Charles.

“He was seldom at home, spending much of the day on the water, and at the ordnance works at Woolwich, but for the most part in the King’s Yard at Deptford, when I saw him on three occasions, working diligently in one of the shipbuilding sheds. The foreman of the yard in-

formed me that, uncouth as he appeared, little escaped the Prince's observation.

"The servants at Sayes Court bore him great ill-will, because of his unclean and strange habits.

"He was often afoot by four o'clock in the morning, setting the whole house astir. Yet I have not heard that he demanded much personal service, and such as he required was chiefly performed by his followers. He lived indeed very simply, though not so simply as when he worked at the East India Docks at Oostenburg in Holland, where he was wont to light his own fire, cook his own food, and carouse in the ale-houses with his workmates.

"He used Sayes Court very ill; above all the beautiful gardens, wantonly damaging the fruit trees, and cutting up the bowling-green by driving heavy barrows across it.

"I recall one morning late in March, when, having repaired to this house to see the Czar for the settlement of a bill, I discovered poor Mr. Evelyn standing with a very rueful visage in one of the pleached alleys of the gardens.

"Even as I approached, I heard horrid noises of savage laughter followed by the sound of cracking branches. On my right rose the great holly hedge five feet thick, the growth of many years, and the boast of Sayes Court. Through this hurtled a great bulk. It was the Czar seated in a wheelbarrow, pushed by a hulking servant. The faces and hands of both master and slave were stung to blood by the prickly leaves, and torn by the broken branches. It was then I think that I had very plainly some inkling of that touch of madness that they say the Prince later displayed. Otherwise surely the veriest savage had not found pleasure in such foolishness.

"I would I could picture to you the sour smile on Mr. Evelyn's face, as the Czar, shouting to his servant in his outlandish tongue, was wheeled right up to the unfortunate gentleman, who, if ever a man was nigh to weeping, was then I think so inclined, for he worshipped his garden.

"I have heard that the Treasury afterwards paid him £350 for damage caused by his troublesome guests.

"A terrible man was that same Czar Peter, and one

whom, though he bore himself kindly towards me, I feared to the very end. Moreover, though he seemed to regard me with favour, I had no reason to remember his liberality, for he was unprincipely in his niggardliness, and all those who approached him lamented that his beastly habits were not made more endurable by generosity.

“He left at the end of the following April, and I had it from one of the Court gentlemen that, when the Czar took his leave of King William, he slipped in His Majesty’s hand a twist of brown paper. It contained a large, uncut diamond of great value. So uncouth did the Muscovite show himself to the very end, though one might have thought that he would have acquired some polish during his travels.

“The last time I saw him was in the parlour at Sayes Court.

“He was seated astraddle on a chair, clothed in a rough sailor’s dress, which he chiefly affected. His eyes were aflame with anger, and his followers huddled fearful in a corner of the foul-reeking room.

“And, remembering the tiger glance of those bloodshot eyes and the snarl of those thick lips, I can believe the tales told of him in the years following his return to Muscovy, where, after taking part in the butchery of the unhappy Strelitzes, he sat among the dead and dying, gloating over his vengeance, with a cup of brandy in his blood-stained hand.”

XXXII

LIFE ON BOARD A BRITISH MAN-OF-WAR (EIGHTEENTH CENTURY)

ON a summer's day, in the year 1730, the *Amphion*, 74-gun frigate, lay in a harbour of the West Indies.

Mr. Hiren, surgeon's mate, was dining in the cock-pit, a gloomy hole, six feet square, built below the water-line and immediately above the hold. From it a steep ladder led up to the deck. On either side, in the cable-tiers, and separated from the cock-pit by canvas screens, were the lodgings of the quartermaster and of the midshipmen. The place was, even at noon, lighted by candles; it was rank with the smell of putrid cheese, rancid butter, and other stale provisions from the adjoining steward's quarters.

The table was a mere board hinged to the bulkhead of the after-powder-room. It was covered with a piece of sailcloth, not over clean, on which stood filthy pewter platters and spoons.

It was Monday, a banyan or meatless day, and the fare was boiled peas mixed with salt butter and shredded onions, food which the sailors held in contempt, but which, in the tropics, was a far more wholesome diet than the salmagundy of Irish horse (a kind of stew of salt beef heavily peppered), or the half-putrid pickled pork that was then the usual ration for the navy.

Mr. Hiren hastily finished his meal with a long draught of ale-flip, and went up the steep ladder to the deck, for the captain was expected on board.

On the planks of the poop, which were bleached white by the blinding sun, two seamen, fastened by iron rings

and shackles to the deck, lay dazed by the intense heat.

Hiren's eyes flamed at the sight of those poor wretches, so tortured for some petty offence by order of the tyrannical captain. He thought bitterly of the people at home, who, safe behind their moat of sea, guarded by the fleet, were indifferent to the lot of seamen. These men who had made the name of England respected on every ocean, were compelled to pass their lives in gloomy, floating castles, that sometimes kept at sea for months on end. Time hung heavy during the winter and in rough weather, when the crews were confined in dark, narrow quarters. So monotonous was the life, that they welcomed even the dangerous work of handling and reefing the heavy sails, clinging with hands and bare feet, a hundred feet above the running sea. They were fed on putrid meat, and coarse, hard biscuits, out of which the weevils often tumbled; their drink was brackish water and coarse rum; they slept in quarters unbelievably crowded, and so foul that a man must shave his head, if he would keep clean. Nor were the officers themselves, save the captain, much better provided for. Small wonder that the press-gang was needed to man the ships!

Mr. Hiren recalled the evening at Tower Stairs, when he himself, returning from a visit to a patient, had been felled by a blow with the back of a hanger, and bundled on board the pressing-tender. It was luckily true that few captains were as brutal as the commander of the *Amphion*, but, even in the best of circumstances, the life of a British seaman was hard, the long voyages in unhealthy vessels dangerous and dreary, and the pay so small that he was filled with admiration for the cheerfulness, constancy, and good-nature of the men.

"Here a' comes! Stand to your tackle, my bullies!" shouted the bosun in the waist below.

A boat shot from the quay. It was a ten-oar barge, in the poop of which sat the captain, sheltered from the heat, like an Eastern king, under a vast umbrella. A few minutes after he was hoisted over the side in a chair, to the sound of the bosun's pipe.

Captain Amos Fletcher was a tall, bulky man, bull-necked and evil of countenance. He wore a white hat with a red plume, and a coat of pink silk, embroidered with gold. His waistcoat and knee-breeches were of crimson velvet, his stockings of white silk, his shoes of blue morocco leather. At his side hung a light sword in a sheath inlaid with gold. His hands were cased in white gloves, and an amber-headed cane swung at his wrist by a tasselled silk cord.

The captain strode moodily to his cabin, called for the navigating lieutenant, and disappeared, leaving a wake of heavy scent.

Shortly after the bosun's pipe sounded the muster, the capstans were manned, the anchors hoisted to the cat-heads, the topmen went aloft, the great sails were shaken out and bent, and the ship gathered way beating out to sea.

Hiren learnt that they were bound for the harbour of San Tomas, where it was reported that a Spanish treasure galleon was lying. This ship Captain Fletcher, a brutal but daring officer, proposed to capture.

The surgeon went down out of the brilliant sunshine into the sick-berth, where some fifty men lay in hammocks, slung little more than a foot apart, and raised but a couple of feet from the planks.

The place was incredibly foul, and so warm that the surgeon stripped to the waist for his task. To such a degree were the patients crowded that he and the waiters had to creep under the hammocks to reach them. Among the sick were some men wounded in a recent encounter with two French frigates. Several had festering stumps; one sailor had just died untended. In a corner were a dozen fever cases, purple in the face, and gasping for breath in that polluted air.

When Mr. Hiren, half-stifled, came again on deck, it was night. He reeled up to the poop and sat between the great, carved lanterns, huge as sentry-boxes, that cast red fire on the smooth, moonlit sea.

It was long before he went down to his unwholesome sleeping quarters deep below.

Next morning, as he finished his breakfast of biscuits soaked in brandy and water, he heard that the ship's helm had been put hard a-starboard, and that they were making straight for the mainland—where they would hug the shore, till they drew near San Tomas.

By the afternoon they had made their landfall, and, coming close in, ran southwards, with the rugged coast on their starboard bow.

The *Amphion* was now cleared for action; guns run out, powder-tubs filled, shot piled, cutlasses ground.

Captain Fletcher ordered most of the sick to be brought on deck, and compelled them to get ready to fight, flogging those that hung back.

The two sailors shackled in the poop entreated that they might be released and take their chance with the rest, rather than lie helpless under fire, but their request was brutally refused.

Already the entrance of the harbour of San Tomas was in sight. Within rose the masts of the galleon and of a small Spanish sloop.

As the *Amphion* crashed through the fairway, the forts guarding it, and the fascine batteries on the hills, opened fire. Balls tossed up the water alongside, smoke drifted golden in the evening sunshine, but fortunately the fire was ill-directed.

Shortening sail, the *Amphion* drew skilfully alongside the tall, lumbering galleon, which, cutting its cables, endeavoured to manœuvre so as to draw close under the protection of the forts and batteries.

The enemy had been taken by surprise, and the great craft, towering above them, with its raking poop and carved quarter-galleries, was full of noise and confusion. Many of the crew were manifestly on land, for boats crammed with sailors and soldiers were putting hastily off from the shore towards the vessel.

Captain Fletcher, playing skilfully on these with his starboard guns, brought his ship close alongside the galleon, raked it with a withering broadside, then closed and made fast with grappling-irons.

The *Amphion's* men, hanger in hand, attempted to

board the galleon. Three times they were hurled back with great loss, foiled by the fierce defence and by the boarding-nets, but, at last, they won a footing and a desperate struggle began, during which the Spaniards' musketry swept the decks of the frigate, killing a score of men; among them one of the sailors shackled on the poop.

Hiren was summoned below to the sick-berth, where the wounded were piled in crowded heaps.

As he bandaged and operated, he heard overhead the clash of weapons, the rattle of fire-arms, and the continuous stamp of feet.

At length came a lull, followed by hoarse cheers.

Mounting on deck, he saw the galleon's flag slowly fluttering down the poop-staff, and before he was swept below by a rush of waiters bearing more sufferers, he caught sight of men hurling down heavy chests of bullion and bars of gold and silver from the galleon's bulwarks.

Not long after, the grapplings were cut, and the ships drifted apart smothered by volumes of smoke from the blazing Spanish vessel, which the English had set on fire.

The *Amphion*, hastily clapping on sail, and harried by the guns of the forts and of the little sloop, swung round the burning galleon and beat out to sea. The Spaniards had now got the range, and shots splintered the decks; one ball crashed through the three-foot oak scantling and across the sick-berth, leaving a ghastly crimson trail in that dim place crowded with the wounded and dead.

Gradually the tumult of the guns grew faint, and the frigate under full canvas ran triumphantly across the silence of great waters lit by the tropic moon.

Some four hours after, reeling with fatigue, Mr. Hiren came on deck into the moonlight.

From the men's quarters forwards, where the sailors were already gambling away the prize-money which would be allotted to them, came sounds of rough ribaldry. In the waist under a tarpaulin the dead lay very still, and far away in distant England people were sleeping securely in the faint hours before the dawn.

XXXIII

THE BARBARY PIRATES (EIGHTEENTH CENTURY)

ONE stormy September evening in 1741, a mixed company of tradesmen, farmers, fishermen, and seafarers sat in the parlour of the Three Ships Inn at Poole.

Through the casement, on which the flying rain splintered, the sky gleamed grey over a leaden, white-ridged sea. Over the mantelpiece hung a quaint engraving of the Grand Sophy, seated cross-legged on a divan, a curved sword across his knees.

"Yon's a gert prince," said William Poulton, a ship's chandler, "and the lord of a famous and valiant people. I have a cousin, in London town, a Turkey merchant, who hath a good conceit of these same Turkish people."

Thereupon, out of the shadow behind them, a harsh voice suddenly said, "Then may the Lord forgive him, master, and keep him from falling into the hands of those same foul heathens!"

He, who spoke so, pushed his way among the astonished company—a grizzled, battered man, very strongly built, and weathered to a copper brown, out of which his grey eyes glittered coldly. He wore a seaman's smock, and over it a blue waistcoat laced with tarnished silver. On his head was a red skullcap of frayed silk; a hanger and pistols hung at his belt, and his bare feet were shod with Spanish sandals of plaited rope—a fierce-looking fellow, with a jagged, white scar that played like a seam of lightning across his bronzed face.

"No offence, masters!" said he, looking at their scared faces; "I'm not for quarrelling, but my gorge rises to hear

good Christians speak civilly of that spawn of sin. Fetch me a jug of cider, landlord, and I will be so bold as to offer this company the like. Your health, my masters! Aye, look on me. Mark my twisted limbs and the scar on my face. Mark you this too!"

He swiftly unbuckled his belt, stripped off waistcoat and smock, and turned up his shirt, baring a broad back rutted like a country lane with deep purple ridges.

"See and feel, my masters, that you may learn by this token what these same Turks can do to us Dorset men, for good Dorset am I, Tom Abney of Lyme Regis, where I landed, Tuesday last, after seven-and-twenty years of captivity among the heathen—seven-and-twenty years, no less—so that I have half-forgotten our good tongue. But you shall hear!

"It was, look you, in March 1714, that I sailed from Southampton, bound for Naples in Italy. Not far from the great island of Sardinia, on the twentieth day, at nightfall, there came swiftly on us two Barbary galleys, lean, long ships fitted with sweeps, and we had scarcely time to seize our weapons before they lay alongside, one on either quarter, making fast to us with grappling-irons. Twice they tried to board us and we beat them off, but the third time they prevailed. Two tall fellows rushed at me and I was brought down by this same sweeping cut that trims me so handsomely.

"When I came to myself, I was aboard one of their galleys. They had spared me because of my youth and great strength; all our other wounded the inhuman dogs had tossed over the side. The rest, bound two and two, they had brought away, plundering and firing the ship, the flames of which made a blood-pool of the sea.

"On the second day we ran into Oran, where we were sold as slaves; but as for me, being a stout fellow, they shipped me as a rower on one of their pirate-craft.

"Twelve years I served them, chained to a bench, naked, fed on scraps like any cur, flayed to the bone with whips when I was weary, as my back bears witness.

"I would, master, that same cousin of yours in London could have sailed with me and witnessed what these eyes

of mine have seen in those unholy years: ships without number gutted and set on fire; the wounded hurled into the sea to drown; Christian men, women, and children carried off to lifelong slavery.

"In the eighth year, lying in harbour at Sphax, I contrived to escape, and, wandering along the coast to Tunis, was captured, flogged, and sold as a slave to a merchant, who took me by way of Egypt, a long journey across the desert, to Bagdad, once a great city, but now much fallen from its former state.

"Here my master, knowing I could not escape, granted me liberty to wander about the city, whereby I was enabled to see many curious things.

"One evening, in the summer, I was in the outlying parts of the city, walking along a lonely street that ran between blank garden walls. At one point on my left hand a house overhung the roadway; on the face of it the rising moon shone wondrous bright.

"As I halted under that house, I know not why, I thought of that same moon shining on Lyme Regis, whereupon I struck up the catch of a Dorset song.

"Suddenly a silver bracelet tinkled on the ground beside me; and, looking upwards, I saw a lattice against which a veiled woman, heavily jewelled, was pressing with her eyes fixed on me. Judge of my astonishment, when, in true Dorset, though cruelly broken, she inquired of me whether I were an Englishman. Which when I had confirmed, though with some hesitation, not knowing her purpose, she asked of me if I had the Arabic; and, discovering that I understood it well, addressed me in that tongue, for she could talk very little English. She bade me have no fear, for there were none to overhear us, her husband being away, and the slaves busy in another part of the house.

"And I, because my heart was soft at the name of Dorset, listened to her while she told me her tale; though I will confess I was afraid, for the men of that country are mightily jealous and do not suffer their women to hold speech with any strange man.

"What she told me I will relate briefly, not to weary



THE SCENE IN A BY-STREET IN BAGDAD

you with that which took long in the telling, for she who spoke wept as she delivered her story; nor am I ashamed to say that I also, hearing her, was greatly moved, even to tears.

“‘Stranger,’ she said, ‘I likewise am from England; though it is so long since I left it that I have forgotten the speech of it, and thought indeed to have forgotten it altogether; yet is the memory of it not so dead, but that my heart leapt within my breast at the sound of your Dorset catch. Oh, the music of the old speech! and oh, the green hills of Dorset, the sweet English flowers, and the scent of the hayfields! Rose Drew they called me, and in Slade I was born; which place, if you are Dorset, you will know—a little village by the sea. There we lived, four of us—my parents, my sister Jane, and myself—hard by the little grey church, through the windows of which the leaves sing in the summer-time.

“‘One night, in the dead of sleep, we children were wakened by terrible cries, and by the sound of musketry without. I can see my mother weeping, and calling out that the Barbary rovers were on us. Thereafter a gang of brown men, in outlandish clothes and with drawn swords, burst into the house and dragged us into the street. Across the threshold my father lay dead, and, all about, many men, old women, and children. They bore us to the shore, and rowed us to a slim, evil-looking galley, which at once put out to sea, moving noiselessly with sails and great oars, muffled in rags that they might make no sound. Aboard were some two-score people of our village, for the most part young women and children. By daybreak we were out of sight of land.

“‘Daily the sun grew warmer, and yet the voyage seemed to have no end. At last, one night, we ran between two lofty headlands, and, in the morning, came to a yellow coast on which was a town marvellous white. Here they sold us. A negro purchased me; my mother and my sister were dragged away by an Arab merchant. I have never seen them since.

“‘The negro conveyed me to Cairo in Egypt, where I

was sold to an old woman who taught me singing and dancing, in which, if I did not well, she whipped me sorely ; otherwise she did not use me ill.

“ ‘In my sixteenth year, as I reckoned it, I was sold to a merchant, who took me a long journey through Aleppo across the desert to this city, where he bestowed me as a slave on his wife. She was a cruel woman ; and I did not lament her death, which took place five years after.

“ ‘By and by my master, who had long looked on me with favour, took me to wife. That is some twenty years since. He has in truth been a good and kind husband, nor am I unhappy. I have three children, and all that my heart desires. Why should I grieve ; save that often o’ nights my mother and my sister weeping stand by my bed, so that I fear things have gone ill with them ! Also, in this parched country, the green downs of Dorset rise cool before me, and its speech comes in my mind like a brook flowing through a rocky place. Yet, if I could, I would not return, for I should be but a stranger. So forget me ; only, if you win back to Dorset, seek out my uncle, Gervase Drew, at Upway, and give him news of me. Here is money wherewith to purchase your liberty. Nay, I can well spare it, for we are rich. Farewell ! and see you return here no more, lest evil befall us both.’

“ ‘She flung me a purse of gold and withdrew from the lattice.

“ ‘I abode yet some months in Bagdad, but, though I often bent my steps again to the street, I never saw her more.

“ ‘The ensuing year my master took me with him to Alexandria in Egypt, where, through the offices of a French merchant, I bought my freedom, and now, after many perils, am I in England again. On my way hither, I inquired at Upway for Gervase Drew, and learnt he hath been dead these nine years.

“ ‘And whither think you, my masters, I am bound ? Why, to Portsmouth ! where, I purpose, if I can, to enter King George’s Navy, in which, if I come across any of the accursed Barbary rovers, I trust to settle some of the scores of poor Rose Drew and many good Christian people.”

XXXIV

AN ENGLISH GIRL IN INDIA (1762)

LITTLE Lavinia Williams looked sadly out on the compound of her uncle's home in Calcutta, for this was her last day in Bengal. She was to sail that evening in the *Lion*, East Indiaman, now at anchor in the broad river, not half a mile away.

Beyond the parched enclosure and its bright flower-beds rose the straight, brown ramparts of Fort William, and the roofs of the factory, quivering under the glare of the Indian sun.

Her mother, standing silently behind her, smoothed the child's fair hair with a lingering fondness; in a corner by the door the white-robed ayah rocked herself and moaned.

There were tears in the young English widow's eyes, for she dreaded the long parting from her only child. Barely six years ago she had lost her husband, one ghastly night of June in 1756, when, not far away, in the stifling jail-room of the military prison, 145 Englishmen and one Englishwoman had gasped in a small crowded room underground. The breathless Indian dawn had broken on twenty-two white-faced men and one woman, staggering out of that pit, the only survivors. She yearned to accompany her daughter to England, but the journey was too expensive, and her brother, Jonathan Bradley, Clerk of the East India Company, needed her services. He had indeed been very good to them, and would have spared her to his little niece, but his honesty, then, unfortunately, a rare quality in an official of the Company, did not permit him to support a separate establishment in England. He had promised, however, that, if all were well, she should before many

years return to Somerset, for whose green hills the old man yearned passionately; the more so, because, owing to a pitiless internal disease, only he and the doctor knew that he would never see them again.

Mr. Bradley stood in the doorway, looking wistfully at the tall masts of the homeward-bound ship.

"You had better go with the child to the bazaar and complete your purchases," he said. "You have not yet procured a shawl for Lucy, and the *Lion* will drop down with the afternoon tide."

Lavinia and her mother, accompanied by two servants bearing parasols against the dreadful heat, walked to the little bazaar of the factory. Here, while Mrs. Williams bargained for muslin and other presents, the little girl walked among the booths where the weavers were at the loom fashioning bright fabrics, and the metal-smiths hammered musically at vessels of brass. She loved the brown people among whom she had been born; the naked copper-coloured babies with the soft brown eyes of deer; the veiled women with their tinkling bangles; the stalls filled with gorgeous woofs and flowers. She knew that she would see none such in the land where she was going.

As they came out of the bazaar, a heavy, muffled tread sounded behind her; a gust of warm, pungent air swept her cheek.

It was Barton Sahib's great elephant, a monster so old that he had been of full growth in 1696, when the English had purchased Kalikutta sixty-eight years before.

The huge beast was a favourite with all the English children, and especially with Lavinia, who loved to feed it. He paused before her with outstretched trunk, and she hastened to give him some cakes that her mother had bought for the journey. The grey giant swept them into his vast red mouth; then, at the bidding of the mahout perched on him ten feet overhead, raised his trunk and trumpeted his thanks.

Mrs. Williams scolded Lavinia for her extravagance.

"Nay, dearest mother!" said the child, with a sob. "It is for the last time, and I wished him to have a pleasant remembrance of me."

When they reached home, Lavinia was bidden to lie down and rest, but she could not sleep. In spite of the great heat, the chillness of the northern country to which she was bound seemed already to have descended upon her.

After the midday meal, her uncle took her on his knee, and said to her in an unsteady voice:—

“My dear little niece, you are about to leave us, and though we shall miss you sorely, I would not have you remain. You are now seven years of age, and I doubt not but that you must know in what constant anxiety we English live in this country. Never shall I forget those two dreadful days, the 22nd and the 23rd of June, five years ago, when we within Fort William trembled, thinking of Robert Clive at Plassey but seventy miles distant, with barely 1000 British and 2000 Sepoys against 50,000 of the enemy, who had, moreover, seven times his artillery, and that directed by Frenchmen. Had he lost, I shudder to think of our fate at the hands of the monster Surajah ud Dowlah, the murderer of your father in the Black Hole yonder! And although, since that time, we are in a more advantageous position, who can foresee what the machinations of the French may yet effect? I will grant that their power to harm us has been greatly diminished by the victories of Boscawen at Gibraltar, and of Howe at Quiberon Bay, which successes, by sweeping the navies of King Louis from the ocean, will for a while prevent the French from dispatching troops to India. The Spaniards also, from whom we lately took the Philippines, are for the moment powerless at sea, so that I rejoice to think that, save for the peril of shipwreck, you will voyage to England in safety, as the convoy that will accompany the *Lion* and the other vessels will ensure you against privateers and the Barbary pirates. Nevertheless, it is painful to reflect that we shall have no news of you for more than a twelvemonth—so long is the journey home. God bless you, my little one! Be a good child, and bear a kind memory of your old uncle. He will in truth be but a sad man when his little gossip is gone from him; and now bid you farewell to the servants, who, I believe, do most powerfully grieve for your going.”

Bearers and a palankeen conveyed Mrs. Williams and Lavinia to the wharf, whence they were rowed to the *Lion*, a noble East Indiaman, armed with guns like a vessel of war. The deck was crowded with Englishwomen and children, soldiers, and officials. Mrs. Latham, the wife of a captain, had undertaken the charge of Lavinia, and of two of her playmates, who were also sailing for England.

With an aching heart the little girl sat on the poop. By her crouched the poor ayah, weeping bitterly, and calling on her young mistress not to forget her faithful Sarajini.

At length the signal of departure was hoisted; Lavinia was folded in the arms of her mother and uncle, and felt the tears of the ayah flow warm on her hand.

Then she was alone.

The capstans were manned; the anchors swung dripping out of the muddy stream; and the Indiaman, followed by two tall consorts, dropped down the river.

The child sat with her dim eyes fixed on the retreating mass of Fort William, brown and stark among the little cluster of the factory. Over it the flag of England hung listlessly in the sultry air.

In the swift onrush of the tropic dusk she saw little lights break out of the dimness that was India; the velvet sky shone with unnumbered stars, bright as the tears in her mother's eyes.

She never saw her mother or her uncle again; the latter died before seven months' sailing brought the *Lion* to England, and the plague swept away Mrs. Williams only a fortnight after her brother's death.

A few loving letters were all that remained to Lavinia. These, when she had grown to be an old woman, she often read in her quiet Somerset home. To the end the Mendips seemed very fresh and green by contrast with the brown land where her childhood had been spent and where her grandson lay buried, having fallen for England in the assault of Seringapatam,

XXXV

A SPY IN ENGLAND (1768)

WE do not like the idea suggested by the word "spy"; it seems to denote deceit, treachery, cunning, and other forms of behaviour which honourable men despise. It is an ugly word, and yet I, Colonel Beville, or, to be more precise, the Sr. de Beville, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Dragoons, a French officer of tried quality and the accredited agent of the Duc de Choiseul, come under the description, and I glory in the fact that for over two months, namely, from 7th September 1768 to November of that same year, I wandered here and there in the south of England just as Colonel Grant of Blairfindry had done in the spring, seeing far more than he saw and returning home full of news for my dear land of France. He had been fortunate in visiting England just as London was much disturbed by the riots caused by the arrest of John Wilkes, editor of the *North Briton*. Remember this. A spy takes his life in his hands; sometimes only a word stands between him and a shameful death—only a word, or a gesture, or a piece of gold. He lives in the midst of enemies who would tear him limb from limb, exercising the wit of one man against that of a nation. Truly, from some points of view, a spy may be held to be a very brave man, who sacrifices himself for patriotism. But enough of that. You wish to hear my perfectly true story. Not many have ever heard it. Here it is.

I left Calais at eight o'clock in the morning of 7th September 1768 with full instructions from the Duc de Choiseul. We had a south-west wind, but, in mid-channel, my packet-boat directed its course to the South Foreland. We kept the land on our right, steered past the

belfry of the little hamlet of Westley, away on the top of the Downs, and so reached Dover.

Perhaps I had better tell you that not long before this time England and France had passed through one of the great wars of the eighteenth century. France had had the worst of it; England had taken from her Canada and India, and, what was worse, prestige and glory. My master, the Duc de Choiseul, was scheming to restore France to her old power. As secretly as he could, he was building up the Army and Navy, strengthening our commerce, and endeavouring to isolate England from the rest of Europe. At the same time he wished to learn what the English were about, how many ships they possessed, and what sort of military display they could make. He recalled the former invasions of England. He remembered Cæsar's descent upon Britain. He had in his mind the Generals Plautius and Agricola, the Saxons, and William the Conqueror. He had read of, and studied, the movements of the Spanish Armada, and, from all these examples, he became certain of two things: first, that it is possible to make a descent on England; secondly, every invader has preferred the south coast—that stretch of country from the mouth of the Thames right away to the coast of Cornwall. And I was selected for this delicate mission, to see what could be done when the time was ripe, to subdue these overproud, obstinate English people.

I left Dover almost immediately, passed through Canterbury and Rochester, and visited London. I saw the three stone bridges over the Thames; the workmen were still employed on Blackfriars. From London I went towards the west by way of Kingston, Staines, Windsor, Maidenhead, Henley, and Oxford. From Oxford I travelled through Woodstock and Gloucester to Bristol. Then I turned south to Bath and Wells; then on through Bridgwater and Taunton, crossing into Devonshire by lonely moorland roads, and so reached Tiverton and Barnstaple. From this latter town I again went due south through Okehampton to Plymouth. Here I stayed for a time, as I wished to see the port, the citadel, and dockyards at my leisure. I saw that the forts and batteries could offer a

good defence while there was a squadron of six men-of-war always ready to sail. Other ships lay there which could soon be fitted up for service. Inside the port I counted thirty fire-ships, of which the smallest could carry fifty cannon. Among these, hateful sight, I saw the *Téméraire* and the *Maréchal de Belle Isle*. There was also a lordly ship called the *Royal George*, pierced for 112 pieces of cannon. It had been recently repaired.

On 27th September I left Plymouth, and travelling through Exeter, Exmouth, Weymouth, Salisbury, and Southampton, came to Portsmouth. One thing I could tell plainly. However freely I might journey about among these dull-witted islanders, they know how to guard their ports. It would be useless for France to try to take Plymouth or Portsmouth from the sea. In Portsmouth I counted fifty men-of-war ready afloat, and these included frigates, one of these the *Great Britain*, a superb ship, carrying one hundred cannon, and recently repaired. Besides, the dockyards are excellent. In this part they make the strongest armaments, and they were, at the time of my visit, actually enlarging the yards, so as to be able to repair twenty ships at a time.

I carried away with me no great hope for the Duc, but I kept on my journey, passing through Chichester, Arundel, Littlehampton, Brighton, Newhaven, Eastbourne, and Pevensey. It struck me that this was a place very suitable for landing, and what was more, it is void of any defences whatsoever.

After inspecting Pevensey, I came to Bexhill and Hastings; then, leaving the coast, I passed through Battle, reached the Tunbridge Road, and so came to London again. I now made London my headquarters. Not only did I wish to ascertain the position of affairs here, but I wanted to see whether Colonel Grant's views were practicable. His idea was that we ought to land at Maldon, in Essex, some four or five thousand men while the main army landed in Sussex, or Kent. He said that there were abundant stores in almost every village—horses, cattle, carts, provisions—and that in five hours all we wanted could be collected. He sent over precise details and

numbers of all these stores in each town and hamlet. He also remarked the people of the country-side are "a soft race," that the militia is in a rotten condition—the worst troops imaginable. On one occasion he watched them trying to form themselves three deep, and the officers were an hour and a half before they could get the men into that formation! He concluded that a well-equipped French force could advance very rapidly over the flat Essex roads.

I wanted to form my own ideas, so I examined the heights of Hampstead and Highgate. There was no difficulty. I just came and went as I pleased, here as elsewhere. I visited the bridges over the Thames at Kew and Putney. Then I made an examination of Greenwich Hospital, the docks at Woolwich and Deptford, and, finally, Woolwich Arsenal.

In that arsenal all the brass cannon are cast, and the iron cannon, which come mostly from Scotland, are tested there. There were a great number in all—English, French, and Spanish. Some had been brought from Havana. The docks at Woolwich were not large; still, I saw a good many frigates in the course of building, and a few ships of the line. The docks were surrounded on the side of the town by a brick wall, and strangers were excluded, but I went to the churchyard, which is somewhat raised, and I could look over the wall into the enclosure. There were at that time on the stocks a ship of ninety cannon and one of sixty, on which it looked as if no work had been done for some time. On the river there were two vessels of sixty cannon each, quite new, or else newly repaired.

So I went on examining what I wished to see, and, at length, on 28th October, I left London and came to the coast near Rye. Passing through New Romney, Dymchurch, Hythe, Folkestone, I came back safely to Dover, having made a complete survey of the south coast of England from Plymouth to Dover. It only remained for me to make a detailed survey of Dover Castle, and then, taking ship, I reached Calais once more.

I brought back twenty plans of the more important places I had visited, such as river-mouths, Plymouth, Southampton, and Portsmouth, the Tower of London, and

Windsor Castle. I also obtained the most recent map of England, one by John Rocque, in the Strand, dated 1768.

My conclusion is this. Make a descent near Portsmouth, and damage, or destroy, the dockyards. Then let the army march straight on London; but do not attack from the south. Advance in three columns, cross the Thames at Hampton Court, Kingston, and Kew, and gain the heights of Hampstead and Highgate. The south of England is in general a difficult place for war. It is very hilly, much cut up by hedges and ditches. Cavalry would be of little use, and one should bear this fact in mind, for their transport is difficult.

I was only one of many secret agents employed by the great French Minister. He worked secretly and unceasingly, testing our information, taking what he wanted, and rejecting what he did not require. I must tell you one amusing little story, before I conclude, which will show you that he got his agents into high places, but not always with success. His ambassador at St. James's was named Francès, and the Duc was rather puzzled about England's professions of peace. He thought it was a game of bluff. So he instructed Francès to see Lord North, and this English statesman gave our ambassador an appointment at nine o'clock on the night of 22nd December 1770. There had been a dinner-party to Lord Sandwich and other members of the Cabinet, where wine had circulated freely. "In fact, monseigneur," wrote Francès, "I found Lord North at nine o'clock as drunk as an owl, and I presume that all the members of the Cabinet were in as good condition as their chief." Now Francès thought his chance had come, so he set to work to obtain information from Lord North. To his intense surprise the English Prime Minister told him exactly the same things as he had done previously. "Now, when men who are very drunk," says my friend Francès, "preserve the same logic and sequence of ideas as they had when sober, it may be deduced that they are doing so from acquired habit and, therefore, that they are speaking the truth." I think so, too; and I am also of the opinion that the invasion of England will be a very difficult task.

XXXVI

THE SPINNING-JENNY (1773)

IN the ground-floor room, at the back of a small house in Nottingham, a stout, broad-set man was seated before a spinning-machine. He was not old, but his back was bent and his face drawn by disease. So intent was he in considering the machine that he did not observe the entrance of his friend, Aaron Wade, till the latter addressed him.

"Still busy with the jenny, Hargreaves! What improvements have you devised in the matter you spoke of to me some time since?"

"Several," said the inventor, speaking slowly; "but none that I shall live to carry out. As I told you before, I am a broken man, Wade; all the heart has clean gone out of me."

"That is since your miserable attorney threw up your case," answered the other. "What, man! Courage! You will yet patent something that will wring money from the rogues in Lancashire."

Hargreaves shook his head.

"Not so! My work is done; yet, at least, I have contrived a machine of sixteen spindles. Some day, though I shall not live to see it, the number will be multiplied; it may be an hundredfold."

"A marvel it is," said Wade, "how you came to think of so ingenious a contrivance!"

"Chance led me to it partly. I recollect how, one day, a one-thread wheel was, by accident, tipped upon the floor, and there continued to spin, though upright. That set me thinking whether several spindles might not be made to revolve in the same position, and spin sundry

threads at once. I had, indeed, already thought much of the matter, since, at that time, in Lancashire we were often short of cotton yarns for our Blackburn greys. All that day I sat thinking; and the same evening set to work. Before long, I devised a machine in which were eight rovings in a row and eight spindles to which the rovings were stretched. Somewhat as in yonder jenny, but the spindles were only eight instead of sixteen. I continued my experiments, and in a short time, by merely turning a wheel, I could produce as much yarn as eight spinners.

“For a while I guarded my secret jealously, supplying myself with yarn for my own looms. But I could not long keep the matter hidden, and presently the whole of Blackburn was talking of it. I was pestered with inquirers who would not be shaken off.

“At first the weavers were on my side, hoping they need no longer be at the mercy of the spinners. These were against me from the beginning. They thought the jenny would bring down the price of yarn, and within a short time the weavers too became uneasy, fearing that the manufacturers would demand finer wefts at the former prices.

“Pretty soon I dared not go abroad in the streets by day, and I was besieged in mine own house by threatening crowds. In the end a great party of them forced their way in, and broke up all my machines; after which I judged it wise to make my way hither secretly.”

“What made you fix upon Nottingham, friend?” asked Wade.

“Because I knew your cotton hosiery was hard put to it to find suitable yarn; so I came here and found employment, as you know, with Mr. Shipley. At first I was in sore straits, for I had lost nigh everything when they wrecked my house. My children were starving and in rags. To buy them clothes, I had been compelled to make, secretly, a few jennies for some of the Lancashire spinning masters. Little enough they paid me for them, and little I knew that the money would be my undoing later on. Yet at the time what else could I have done? I

feared for my very life, if I bided in Blackburn; so much so, in truth, that I made my going and my place of travel secret. Even after I had come hither, it was long before I dared venture openly in the streets.

“Working by stealth in Mr. Shipley’s house, I made half a score of jennies; bettering the patterns I had devised at Blackburn. It was well for me that I had learnt the carpenter’s trade when I was a youngster, so that I was handy with the frames; though not so handy but that, as you are aware, I was glad to get the help of James—a better joiner than myself.

“I think I almost forgot my troubles the day I saw sixteen spindles working at once with never a hitch, and every one of the rovings stretched from the spindles spinning into good yarn. And a child could work it. See here! Aye, man, what is more, the youngsters can do so better than grown-ups, gaining thereby a fair living. There is many a family should bless me for that; and I sometimes wonder whether some of them call to mind how they would have beaten me to death for it if they had caught me.

“In July, now three years ago, James and myself took out a patent for the jenny. Soon after we heard that a number of the Lancashire masters were using the machines, and I served notices on them, forbidding them to do so without payment. As you know, they thereupon sent a lawyer man here to offer me £3000 for the use of the machines. I asked £7000, but, in the end, came down to £4000, by which I stood firm. They refused to meet me at that sum, and I was proceeding with the actions against them when they found out that I had sold jennies to some of the masters at the time I fled from Blackburn. I could not gainsay that, and my attorney threw up the cases. I daresay he was right, and that we should not have got a verdict in our favour; but it was a cruel blow.

“Anyway, here I am, a man broken in health and spirits. My work is done. Yonder stands the jenny, a pretty machine too, though I say it. I say, too, that my jenny is but the mother of better things, for, after all, the yarn that it spins is only fit for weft. We must have one that

will spin yarn hard enough for warp as well. As sure as day, the time will come when we shall have one. I shall not live to see it, but you are a much younger man, and I make bold to say you will. Even now, so they tell me, there is a lad at Hall-in-the-Wood, one Crompton by name, that has a very pretty talent in this line. And when they have devised a machine for spinning all manner of yarn and rovings, what is to hinder them from contriving one that will weave the yarn? I tell you, man, our grandchildren will be clothed in cloth and linen made by machines; machines driven, like flour-mills, by water, or some other power, and which, in one hour, will do the work that fivescore men now do in one week. The days are over when the weaver and spinner can work in their own homes. I myself sitting here am one of the last of them, but whether it will be a good or an evil day for the workers in these trades, the Lord alone knows."

XXXVII

YOUNG ENGLISH SLAVES IN ENGLAND (1800)

THE Reverend William Curwen had been only a few weeks in Bradford, but he was already much depressed by the hopeless misery and indifference of the greater part of his parishioners. The fine old church of which he was rector, and which was so out of keeping with the dingy, rectangular brick-boxes of the new portion of the town that had overflowed about it, was scantily filled with working people, and the attendance at the Sunday school was distressingly irregular.

As he walked through the dingy, squalid streets, on that fine summer evening of June, 1800, the sunlight seemed merely to enhance the wretchedness he saw around him.

He had just stopped to speak to Mr. Blair, a local auctioneer, when a heavy wagon, covered with a tilt, drew up at the door of a large, decayed house. A short ladder was reared against the tail-board of the wagon, and out of the shadow of the tilt climbed a number of boys and girls, mostly between seven and eight years of age; some even younger. They were dressed in the coarse, hideous, pauper clothing which, at that time, degraded English workhouse children. Mr. Curwen was horrified by the look of weariness and fear on those little wan faces.

"Aye, sir, it is indeed a painful sight," said Mr. Blair, "but one which you often see in these parts, and all over the country, for the matter of that. Those are workhouse children from the Midlands. They have been brought here for sale—what else can you call it?—as apprentices, to the mills for the most part.

"I hear Wainwright's are short of young hands. Heaven

protect the poor little souls, if they be going there! Aye, sure enough, there is the usual idiot. The work-house people always bargain that one idiot shall be taken off their hands among the rest. You can picture the lot of such poor, witless creatures. These youngsters, many of them mere babies, will be lodged in the filthy, dark cellar below that house, may be for a week, may be for several, till the overlooker comes and buys them for apprentices to some mill. As I said before, I trust it will not be Wainwright's. He has risen from a workman to a mill-owner, and that sort generally make the hardest masters. Have you been inside a mill? No; I thought not. They do not welcome visitors, for fear they should see the little wretches at work. Sixteen hours a day they work, and by the morning they are so tired that they fall asleep at the machines. To keep them awake they beat them and swing them round by the hair. When they do suffer them to sleep, it is on filthy beds that are never cool; for one set of children is roused out of them to take the places of those who cannot be driven any longer. Play! They never wish to play; they are too tired; all the heart is taken out of them by hard work and bad food. What they give the apprentices to eat is but fit for pigs, and pigs would not thrive on it."

"I wonder," said Mr. Curwen, very white and trembling, "that they do not run away!"

"So they do, and that often, but they are well watched, and, if they get caught, the masters fasten chains on to them; heavy chains, sir, from ankle to hip. It is a disgrace to a Christian land, and I would that some of the people in London, who talk of freeing the blacks in Jamaica, would turn their attention on what is going on here among their own flesh and blood, so to speak. Not that all the mill-owners are equally cruel; but, at the best, it is a dreadful lot for any child, and a sad thing that young fingers and feet should forget their proper use. Besides, what they learn and see in the mills, herded with grown-ups, is no good school for them. Why! when I was a lad, and the mills were first started, parents would not send their wives and daughters there. To call

a young woman 'a factory girl' was a slight; and if a girl had once been in a mill, she could not obtain any other kind of employment, for people thought she had lost her character. But very soon the fall in wages forced not only the women and girls into the factories, but the children too. What else could the parents do, seeing that the masters were able to cut down the work-people's pay to starvation point, by getting a supply of cheap labour from the workhouses! I have heard, and I pray it is so, that a Bill to prevent this sort of child-slavery is coming before Parliament. I wish you good evening, sir!"

As Mr. Curwen sadly continued his walk, bell after bell clashed from the mills.

Immediately, out of the gates streamed the workers. They were mostly poor, undersized beings, with pinched faces and hollow eyes. Pale and listless, they stumbled wearily home in silence. Many of them were cripples or distorted creatures, bent, hump-backed, goblin shapes, staggering out on spindly legs. Mr. Curwen noted how fragile were their arms, and how their hands, horribly claw-like, twitched, as though still cramped by hours of unceasing labour. At the gates stood numbers of parents, ready to carry home children who were too spent to return afoot. Fathers and mothers slung the little, wan creatures on their backs. So weary were the children that they often fell asleep as soon as they were lifted.

The rector let the hideous procession pass by, then turned down a side-street of squalid houses.

Just before him, slouching home, was little William Harrison, a boy of ten, whom he had lately missed at the Sunday school classes.

"Why is it, William," he said, putting his hand on the child's shoulder, "that you have not been to school lately?" The boy raised his white face and looked at him with dull, hollow eyes.

"Please, sir, I have been too tired. I've to be at the mill, regular, by six, and we don't give over till half-past seven, and that when I don't work overtime, as I mostly do."

"How much do you earn?"

"Two-and-six a week, sir, and about tuppence for every three hours' overtime. I generally work nine or ten hours a week overtime."

"What do you do with your money?"

"The reg'lar wage I give to mother; the overtime I keep to buy shoes and clothes—but mother has to put a bit to it. I'm sorry I missed school, Mr. Curwen, for I want to be a scholar."

"Don't you go blaming my boy for missing school, master," said a thin woman coming up behind them. "He has been too tired lately; he has to rest on Sundays, or he'd be falling ill, and then where should we be? As it is, I have to use a strap to get him out of bed of a morning. Praise the Lord, he can still relish his food! There's many of 'em are too tired to eat."

"Do they all work so hard, Mrs. Harrison?"

"Ay, all of 'em, cruel hard. I'm not talking of the poor prentices that they generally kill in three or four years; all the children are treated nigh as bad. Come evening they have to thrash 'em, for the children be too tired to keep awake. Why, I've seen some o' them go on working in their sleep after the billy has stopped. A good number be that weary that they hide in the stores to sleep among the wool, and, when they do find them and thrash them out of the mill, they will as often as not lie down in a ditch or anywhere to sleep, so that they have to be fetched home, as I reckon you must have seen. And when they do get there they are often too tired to eat, let alone wash themselves or undress; they just lie down as they are, ready against five o'clock next morning. And mind you, master, in these parts we are not so badly used as my sister's children in Durham. There's two of them, a boy and a girl, just turned seven and eight. And what do you reckon their work is, master? Why, to creep all day, nigh one thousand feet underground, in the dark, with a chain round their loins, dragging trucks of coal along rails in galleries so low that they can't stand upright, but just creep along on hands and knees, as often as not through six inches of

water and slush. Aye, there are plenty of women and girls, too, doing the same."

"But is it necessary for these children to work?" faltered Mr. Curwen.

"Do you think, master, we would be so stony-hearted towards our flesh and blood if it weren't? See here! I'm a widow, and have myself and him to feed. All I can earn in these times is eight shillings; that's a woman's wage; and, with the two-and-sixpence Billy brings me, for he's a good lad, we can just keep going. It's a blessing that Wainwright's don't pay us, as some do, in tickets for the truck shops, for the tommy there is dreadful dear, and bad at that. There has been talk of starting it. If they do, I don't know where we shall be; but it is no use meeting troubles before they come. I'm not denying that some parents are unnatural and live on what the children bring in; for, if they have a number of them, they can do it, and some of them do. You see men's wages be so cut down now, they've fallen into the way of staying at home and doing the housework, while the missus and the children go out to work. So, master, you must not blame Billy if he's not regular at school. I wouldn't let him go, for I'm dreading he should be driven too hard. His health is not over-good, and I don't want to hear him break out, like my neighbour's child, into that sort of cough that spells churchyard, when they are between man and boy.

"And now good evening to you, for we're going to have a bit of food and then straight to bed. We can't afford a light to sit by, even if we had a mind to it; which we haven't."

Mr. Curwen walked heavily home. His path led him up a little hill overlooking the town. Here he paused a long while, watching the sun set beyond the purple masses of the moors. The light shone red on the huddled houses below, in which one or two patches of orange-coloured blind showed for a short time, and then went out.

And the Rev. Mr. Curwen wondered, as the great red ball dropped behind the moors, whether, in all its wanderings, it looked on greater misery than in this corner of the world.

XXXVIII

A RIDE WITH THE MAIL (1815)

OF course, we folk nowadays (I am speaking of the year 1815—just after our glorious victory at Waterloo) travel so much more rapidly, and with greater comfort than our ancestors ever had the chance of doing. Poor things! What hardships they must have endured! I recollect my father telling me that, one wet summer, he actually measured one of the ruts in a road as he was journeying in the north of England, and he found it was four feet deep, and full of mud. What would it have been like in the winter? He said he advised people who purposed to travel in this terrible country to avoid that infernal road as they would the devil. Then he related that, on another occasion, when he was going from Windsor to Petworth, a distance of forty miles, he took fourteen hours to do the journey, and very frequently his conveyance was either overturned by the ruts or swamped in the mud. Once John Wesley told him that, when he was staying near Lewes, he saw an old lady going to church in a coach drawn by six oxen, not from choice, but because the roads were so difficult that horses could not drag the conveyance over them. I should think she was somewhat bruised after her ride. I have heard that it was necessary at times to take a coach to pieces, and carry it over rough places, or across narrow bridges, and then put it together again.

However, that was in the “good old days”; when inns and roads were abominable. We have changed all that. In London a company has been lately formed by some speculative Jews, who run a coach from town to Brighton in six hours! I hear that the parish authorities at

Newington are refusing to allow the coaches to travel so rapidly, because last week a coachman broke three whips, and fifteen horses died! One can hardly believe the things one hears about the rate of travelling nowadays. They tell me that the great novelist, Sir Walter Scott, actually travelled up to Edinburgh from London at the average rate of ten miles an hour; while the Post Office conveys its letters to distant towns at the speed of eleven miles an hour! Personally, I think that is too rapid a rate. A few years back it used to take three days to journey between London and Birmingham; now one can do the distance in a single day. Well, thanks to the shepherd boy, Telford, and his wonderful roads and bridges, and to Macadam and his smooth, level highways, in spite of our furious speed, we travel more safely than our forefathers did. Scotland ought to be proud of these two sons of hers.

One of the most wonderful rides I have ever had in my life was in June, this year of grace, 1815. Never shall I forget it as long as I live! I had to travel by way of Oxford from London to Birmingham, that busy town which is now clamouring to have a member in Parliament; people tell me it has a population of 100,000, and possesses forty-two steam engines. The roads round the town are certainly most excellent. I started from London in the evening in one of Mr. Palmer's marvellous coaches—coaches such as my father in his young days would have opened his eyes to behold—light, rapid, brilliant, and capable of carrying four inside and three outside passengers as well as luggage. Our coach was the mail—painted dark chocolate colour, with the royal arms emblazoned on the side, and drawn by four fine chestnut horses. It was always a splendid sight to see the coaches start from the General Post Office in Lombard Street; but, on this particular night, the scene was magnificent beyond description. For, had we not just heard of the great victory in Belgium? At last the nightmare of war had rolled away, and the long line of famous battles had won for us a supreme place among the nations. Peace was in sight, glorious, comforting Peace — Peace, with victory and



A RIDE WITH THE MAIL



honour, and London, full of the news, was delirious with excitement. As the long line of coaches stood waiting for the signal for departure, great crowds surged along the pathways, cheering, shouting, waving, tossing hats, performing every sort of extravagance in the joy of overflowing, thankful hearts. There stood the coaches, clean, magnificent, the very horses seeming themselves to realize that something great was afoot. Every part of the coaches was perfect, from linchpin to lamp; coachmen and guards in their royal scarlet as vivid as poppies; reins lying loose in gloved hands; well-brushed hats above beaming faces; mail bags packed away, and lids slammed down and locked. Then, as each town was called out, off thundered the coach over the clean cobbled streets, amid the loud huzzas of the people—a messenger from the heart of England to its outlying members, a voice of comfort and relief. For we were the intelligence of Old Britain on this special evening, about to rush through the brains of the nation, telling of glory and achievement on the battle-fields of Europe. Brave old England, mother of brave sons, once again the saviour of freedom, and the successful opponent of tyranny. “Oxford!” was shouted aloud. The brilliant coachman scarcely moved the reins, for the horses, seeming to catch the cry, drove their hoofs hard upon the road, and the splendid vehicle was rolling on its way through London. We passed along Cheapside amid the clamour of a thousand messages; Oxford Street was just two flying rows of houses as our horses, scorning the roadway with their hoofs, leaped on and on with increasing speed, a jingle of flashing harness and manifold tossing of heads and tails; now we were moving along a broad smooth road beside Hyde Park—only a few years ago a sort of morass, and the haunt of highwaymen; and now from the crest of Notting Hill there opened to the eye the wooded vale beneath, reached by yonder road sweeping down between trees and gardens, fields of ripening corn, fragrant with a thousand scents of the country-side, sweet and cool and peaceful that calm June evening. Ah! it was good to live on such a day. It was good to look at the laurel wreaths festooned about the

coach, and also about the coachman and the guard, and to recollect all that they stood for. We passed along like proud conquerors receiving the salutations of a populace, for right away till nightfall, from lumbering wagon and private conveyance, from schoolboy, merchant, shopman, or watchman, there came a message of goodwill and congratulation. Our national pride had overflowed, and our coach, as it passed along the highway, stood as an emblem of triumph.

We had started from the City soon after eight. It was dark as we swept through Acton and Ealing, and the lamps cast their light upon a grey, white road, while from the windows of the scattered houses and cottages ruddy beams appeared to welcome the night-mail on its glorious passage through the darkness. I had the place which every right-feeling youth loved to obtain—a seat by the coachman—and the night breeze began to grow fresh and cool. At Uxbridge I wrapped my coat and rug closely around me, and settled down to calmness, after the fever of the day, and soon the words of the driver grew farther and farther away as I passed into dreamland, lulled by the rhythmic clang of the horses' feet. When I awoke in the grey dawning light, feeling somewhat chilled, lo! there before me was a city of spires and domes—Oxford! Old England's river was flowing proudly through the rich fields, wagoners were singing on their way, larks were carolling their early morning praise, and, with a burst, we swept in among the old grey colleges, while lazy undergraduates and lazier dons still lay abed. We stopped at the Angel, and revelled in breakfast and an orgy of newsmongering. The place, in spite of the early hour, became the centre of an inquiring crowd, asking for information about the great battle. Years before I remember my old father used to tell me that the Angel was "a very dirty inn and not obliging." Times had changed, however; there was nothing good enough for us. And when I staggered out to my perch beside the coachman I was primed with good beef and coffee, pie, and other desirable things—enough to have fed half a dozen of Blücher's greediest Prussians.

After I had visited my friends in this famous old city I sought the Birmingham coach, fresh horses, fresh country, fresh talk, and fresh spirits! The warm sun had now risen high, and the wide sweep of hills and valleys, long ribbon of road, and flowering hedgerows were kindled with its glow and painted with colour. As we rattled along we threw out every now and again a newspaper, old to us, but new to this remote district, telling of victory. We shouted the glorious news as we swept through some hamlet, waved our hands in triumph as we passed through some bustling market-place. Here we raced by some snug old vicarage where the dear white-headed parson stood before his gate, with a little grandson by his side, and, after hearing our cry of "glorious victory," he ambled off as fast as his aged legs would carry him to have the flag hoisted in the hoary, grey tower of his ancient church. Again we swept by the gates of the magnificent drive leading to an ancestral home, and cried in chorus, to the ladies and gentlemen waiting for our arrival, the news of England's glory, and, before the echoes had died away, were to them merely a speck on the dusty road.

I cannot tell you of all our stops and changing of horses; but wherever these occurred it was the same tale of laughter and rejoicing as we flashed the news through the Midlands. And, like ours, hundreds of other coaches on that great day were spreading the name of Waterloo far and wide across the length and breadth of England. It is wonderful how quickly news is carried in these days. Before that day was out, all over England people were talking of Napoleon's final fall, and reading in the newspapers the account of the battle. Surely we live in wondrous times. I remember reading of the road from London to Oxford. "Turnpike. Middling. Many narrow ways where a horse cannot pass a carriage, and in general, in this county, the not breaking the stones small enough is a great nuisance." Yet here were we rushing along sometimes, when the road was especially good, at the breakneck speed of twelve miles an hour, with the coachman chuckling in good humour as he flicked the

flies off the horses' ears with his whip, and singing to himself: "So old Boney is done for at last!"

And now, ahead, I could see a canopy of smoke lying over a portion of the fields away in the north-west; the roads were becoming smoother and smoother, and also more dotted over with vehicles of all sorts, from huge slow-moving wagons to light swift gigs. Yonder, then, was the mushroom town which is the centre of England's coaching system, "gloomy, noisy, and dirty Birmingham famous for its buttons, its locks, its ignorance and barbarism; for as prosperity increases so does the corruption of tastes and morals. Its knickknacks, hardware, and gilt gimcracks are proofs of the former, and the locks and bars, and the recent barbarous conduct of its populace are evidence of the latter." A town which has no town hall, no public park, no corporation, no member in Parliament. On we rushed, and our news travelled faster than did we ourselves. When we drew up at last in front of the Hen and Chickens, there was a crowd of thousands of people, dirty, work-stained, smoky, English Midlanders, and, when the coachman threw down his reins to the hostler, a mighty cheer, such as I had not heard even in London, arose in a volley of sound to the canopy of smoke above. "Waterloo! Wellington! England for ever!" And so we ended our ride from London, and passed into the brooding shelter of the "Hen and Chickens."

XXXIX

HOW I FIRST SAW A RAILWAY TRAIN (NINETEENTH CENTURY)

ON Christmas Day, 1840, the children of Dr. Mainwaring were seated before a blazing wood fire in the dining-room of their father's fine old Queen Anne house.

They had been entertaining a party of young friends, and were too excited to go to bed, so they had begged that they might sit up in honour of the arrival of their Aunt Elizabeth, a stately, middle-aged lady, whom the London coach, jingling behind four tall greys, had, with many tuneful blasts of the guard's horn, set down at the King's Head that afternoon.

"What a cold journey you must have had, auntie, dear! I trust you are warm now!" said Barbara, the eldest girl, smoothing her aunt's dress; the mauve silk was so stiff and shining.

"Thank you, my child! I am perfectly recovered. I was well wrapped up in my pelisse, and a gentleman most obligingly lent me his cape after we left Farnham. Besides, I am country bred, and prefer to travel in the open air, outside a coach, rather than by the steam trains, which, alas, will soon drive the stages from the roads."

"Tell us about the steam trains, please!" said John, the Winchester scholar. "Recollect that we have not seen one, except in pictures, and father says you have frequently travelled by them."

"I have indeed done so many times, and, if you wish, I will relate my experiences, which, I believe, will be interesting and instructive for you to hear. I would your Uncle George were with us this evening, for he was

present when the first railway in England, the Liverpool and Manchester line, was opened on September 30, 1830. He has often described the ceremony to me.

“In order to keep the line clear of the vast crowd, palings were erected for miles along the cuttings near Liverpool, and numbers of constables, as well as soldiers, were posted to restrain the spectators. Among the passengers were the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, and the unfortunate Mr. Huskisson. Eight locomotives were employed. That which drew the train in which the Great Duke took his place was the ‘Northumbrian,’ driven by Mr. George Stephenson himself. The trains proceeded through the deep ravine of Olive Mount, up the Sutton incline, and across the great Sankey viaduct, under which were assembled thousands of cheering spectators, who had come on foot, in carriages, and in barges, to see the wonderful spectacle of the trains speeding, high overhead, at twenty-five miles an hour. At Parkside, the engines stopped to take in water. It was here that a lamentable accident occurred.

“The carriage in which His Grace, the Duke of Wellington, was travelling, behind the ‘Northumbrian,’ was drawn up on one line to allow the other trains to pass by in review. Mr. Huskisson had alighted, and was standing in the road along which the ‘Rocket’ locomotive, driven by Joseph Locke, was rapidly advancing. Mr. Huskisson, who was shaking hands with the Duke, did not observe the approach of the ‘Rocket.’ When the shouts of the spectators warned him of his danger, he attempted to slip round the door of the carriage, but was struck down by the ‘Rocket,’ and his leg was terribly crushed. He died the same night, at Eccles. The ‘Northumbrian,’ which conveyed the wounded man, travelled at the rate of thirty-six miles an hour—a truly marvellous performance.

“So much I had heard; but my own first essay of this novel method of conveyance was in 1837. On December 14 of that year the Greenwich line was completed, and your uncle, having received an invitation to be present at the opening ceremony, proposed that I should accompany him. I gladly accepted, having, in-

deed, a curiosity, not, I hope, unbecoming, to experience this new mode of travel.

"I must tell you that I had, when staying with your Aunt Anne at Clapham, already seen the railway which was opened in 1802 between the villages of Croydon and Wandsworth; in this case, however, the wagons were drawn, not by steam-engines, but by horses. I had also twice journeyed behind the ingenious Mr. Trevethick's locomotive 'Catch-me-who-can,' which ran on a circular track not far from the village of Euston; but this contrivance and its appurtenances were of the nature of similar amusements, with which showmen at fairs entertain the public.

"It was therefore, I confess, with a pleasurable feeling of anticipation that I accompanied your uncle.

"A hackney coach conveyed us from Bloomsbury, our then residence, to Duke Street, near London Bridge, the station, or terminus, as they call it, of the new railway.

"We arrived in good time, and found the station filled with a dense multitude of sight-seers. Our tickets admitted us to the platform, and we had leisure to examine the vehicles, more especially the locomotive. The driver, a very civil man, bade us admire the ingenuity of the machine, which set us moralizing on the restlessness of mankind, eager to venture life and limb by travelling at a feverish speed, instead of being content with the natural means of rapid travel that the Creator has furnished to us in that swift and noble creature, the horse. But, I digress.

"Not long after we were edified by the arrival of the directors, who were led to their chariots by ushers in uniform to the strains of a band of musicians, attired like Beefeaters. We ourselves took our seats in a first-class carriage. These vehicles were luxuriously appointed, and resembled stage-coaches, but the third-class passengers were accommodated in uncomfortable, open wagons, unprovided with seats. I understand that these wagons are popularly called 'Stanups,' or 'Standipedes,' and it requires an agility, very repugnant to the sensibility of a delicate female, to climb in or out of them.

“The band mounted on to the roof of one of these carriages; a bugle sounded; and we glided majestically out of the station to the accompaniment of cheers, the deafening crash of church bells, and the report of cannon, speeding on our way with a velocity that was compared by a writer in the newspapers to that of a Congreve rocket.

“Judge of my amazement when I found that we were running on a track laid upon arches of brick, some of which, I understand, are now used as dwellings. Below, on either side of us, lay the roofs of houses. In no long time we reached Spa Road Station, which was filled with huzzaing multitudes. Thence we proceeded to Greenwich Station, the eastern terminus of the line, where a fresh band of musicians awaited our arrival. We alighted and visited a fair that had been established outside the station. Afterwards, with your Cousin Alfred, whom we met at the fair, we proceeded on foot to Deptford, where, in the docks, we inspected the model of a submarine vessel called a naval torpedo—an invention devised by the famous Lord Dundonald to check the ambitions of the French. In the evening we were treated to a fine display of fireworks, and subsequently returned home by the railway. The line was beautified by tasteful illuminations of coloured lamps, affording a spectacle very pleasing to the eyes.

“I have since made various journeys on this railway, and have twice been gratified by the sight of the managing director, who has made a practice of displaying himself surrounded by a degree of pomp calculated to excite the admiration of beholders.

“Certainly the company spares no pains to attract passengers and to enliven the journey. Thus, among other things, a band was, for a long time, in attendance at both termini to play the travellers in and out of the trains.

“I have also journeyed on some of the other lines that ply between London and the provinces.

“When visiting your Uncle Joseph, I usually travel by the London and North-Western line. This has its terminus at Euston Grove, a village not far from the Metropolis. The stately Doric portico that guards the

entrance to this station is, I am told, renowned all over the world; but the station behind it is sadly inferior in architecture. It consists of two roofs, supported on arches and pillars of iron and confined by two long brick walls. The carriages of the first and second classes are commodious, but the third-class wagons are open and seatless like the 'stanups' of the Greenwich line; and I have seen the luckless people who travel by them alight in a very pitiful condition, owing to the fuliginous smoke emitted by the locomotives.

"From this station the trains are not drawn by steam-engines, but by cables, up the slope to the summit of the hill where Chalk Farm Station is situated. For this purpose stationary engines are employed, and the two tall chimneys of the engine-house tower on either side of the road, like columns, high above the landscape. At Chalk Farm steam horses, as those machines have, not inaptly, been termed, are harnessed to the trains, which proceed with great swiftness and smoothness.

"I will not pretend that I greatly like this method of travel, but it is considerably faster and cheaper than the stage-coach, and it is flattering to human vanity that the mind of man has contrived such ingenious engines.

"Your uncle is of opinion that the picturesque stages will be discarded, and that the English country-side will soon be disfigured by iron tracks, along which trains will rush at fifty or even sixty miles an hour, harnessed to snorting monsters emitting smoke and flame like fiery dragons.

"And now, children, to bed! I see sleepy eyes about me."

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